

**FROM ACTIVISM  
TO DISILLUSIONMENT:  
THE STORY OF  
AN MK COMRADE**

*The autobiography of  
Khaya Skweyiya*



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First edition published by Khaya Skweyiya in 2022

**ISBN 978-1-928332-81-7**

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This publication was made possible by the generous support from the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The HSRC team included Dr Cyril Adonis, Dr Stephen Rule and Dr Gregory Houston.

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Produced, designed and typeset by COMPRESS.dsl | 800408\_C | [www.compressdsl.com](http://www.compressdsl.com)  
Printed and bound in South Africa.

*'A good head and a good heart are always  
a formidable combination.  
But when you add to that  
a literate tongue or pen,  
then you have something special.'*

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

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# Introduction

Encouraged by comrades to commit my personal experience of the National Liberation Struggle to written text, I invite you to share the story that follows. It is my honest wish that it will serve as a platform for further discussions and interrogation of certain trends and realities that have prevailed in our society, especially since 1994.

As a person who was once diagnosed by three different psychiatrists as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), I am hoping that by embarking on this exercise it will somehow constitute a form of therapy. I know with 100% certainty that while writing, I intermittently shed tears and sobbed uncontrollably, as I experienced indelible flashbacks and reminiscences. After finally finding my voice, hitherto gagged by marginalisation, I persisted with this book so that all South Africans would be able to hear from the horse's mouth and would begin to know more about where we are coming from as a country, in order ultimately to reach our democratic dispensation. I can say with some degree of certainty that mine has been among the hardest and most painful parts of that historic process.

Admittedly, my gaping wound is very deep and hurting in my heart. Fortunately, I come from a tradition that strictly prohibits committing suicide under any circumstances. It is my hope that by embarking on this intellectual and emotional journey, it will also assist me in ensuring that I reconnect with who I am as a person and where I have come from as a former committed and dedicated freedom fighter and uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) operative. I have been subjected for many years to a 'disconnect' that was occasioned by marginalisation and psychological strangulation – reminiscent of the past brutal apartheid era – since the advent of our democratic dispensation. By pursuing

this route, I also hope that my self-esteem and dignity, that were negatively impacted in the most destructive way imaginable, will be restored once and for all.

It is pertinent to mention the concept 'Revolutionary Optimism.' I learnt about it from the late Cde Oliver Reginald Tambo<sup>1</sup> in 1978. At the time, I was undergoing a gruelling six months' military guerrilla training course in southern Angola at the tender school-going age of 15 years. Revolutionaries worthy of the name do not commit suicide or escape from jails, let alone just surrender. Revolutionaries are trained to convert any space they occupy into a terrain of struggle. The account of my sojourn in Robben Island Prison from 1983 to 1991, testifies to this. Archived photos of the Prison include my own image, taken in 1993, when we had a reunion to discuss the plight of the island as a Heritage site.

To understand the context of what I have written, fellow South Africans and compatriots, I implore you to just relax and keep on reading, much more is still to come. If you are as soft-hearted as I am, you are welcome to cry with me, perhaps in solidarity. But you are going to realise while reading that I need your solidarity, which is more than just crying along with me. I have repeatedly knocked on certain doors, only to have them closed in my face. This is my last resort. On behalf of my tiny family, I am writing this in the hope that you will be empathetic to my plight and respond accordingly.

At one stage I was encouraged to make my voice heard by the Honourable Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Cde Thabang Makwetla. He pointed out during the Heritage month of September 2019, in a television interview, that we have not done enough to ensure that the heritage of our glorious People's Army uMkhonto weSizwe is preserved. That is why I sincerely wish that this exercise encourages others with a similar background to mine, to reflect objectively on their own personal struggle history in the broader National Liberation Struggle, for the sake of our children and the future generation.

As a self-confessed Revolutionary Agent of Change, my book basically revolves around endeavouring to deliberately influence the mindset of my fellow South Africans and compatriots in a positive and progressive way. This will enable them to make sense of the socio-cultural, economic and political conditions of their existence, with the sole intention of effecting positive and progressive changes.

It is quite unfortunate that the education system that was imposed on us does not allow critical reflection of our realities, with an intention of effecting change. Therefore, I want my fellow South Africans to begin to realise that aspects of the past remain ingrained in our collective mindset, as a consequence of the rotten system of apartheid. These have no place in the present democratic dispensation and must be uprooted consciously and deliberately. For the remaining years of my life, it is my intention to make that endeavour my main mission even if I start with those who are closest to me.

When we have a diet of healthy nutritional ingredients, our physical bodies grow healthily. Likewise, when we read material comprising enlightening, informative, progressive or educative ideas we grow healthily at an intellectual and emotional level. It is normally said that 'knowledge is power', but for me, this is only true if knowledge leads to positive and proactive engagement with society. However, this is contingent upon knowledge being shared, thus stimulating progressive and positive influence, outlook and perspective. The alternative is to lose such knowledge and memories, and merely to add to the population of a cemetery that is already rich in lost knowledge and wisdom.

Coincidentally, as I write, it is Youth Month (June), during which South Africans honour and remember the youth of 1976 whose bravery and fighting spirit surprised all and sundry when they faced the heavily armed Security Police of the state machinery of the apartheid regime with their bare hands. For me writing a book at this juncture invokes in me a sense of nostalgia because I am a product of the political rhythm and militancy of that period of history. This month of June 2019 also coincides with the anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter on 26 June 1956 in Kliptown; where the people of our country, from all walks of life, gathered to map out the type of South Africa in which they aspired to live. A Freedom Charter whose preamble puts it very clearly that, 'We the people of South Africa declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.' Until the hopes, goals, and aspirations of this country, as embodied and enshrined in the Freedom Charter are fully realised, there is no reason to discontinue the struggle. That would be tantamount to selling out.

Worth mentioning before going any further, is that I dedicate this book to the memory of the unsung heroes and cadres of our



glorious army uMkhonto weSizwe Special Operations Machinery. In particular, I think of the era of MK Cde Barney ‘Mutle’ Molekoane; a very brave, courageous, committed comrade. He was a selfless fighter who possessed humility, yet was well known in MK circles to the extent that an MK Military Base in Angola was named in his honour (deservedly so). It an honour for me to be part of that machinery and to serve the revolutionary struggle in the front lines with individuals of such calibre when the machinery was still relatively new in the early 1980s. We served under the late Cde Joe Slovo, a capable Commander and one of the most tried and tested revolutionary leaders of our movement. Some of those – but not all – that I can immediately recall, fought heroically and died in skirmishes and battles inside the country in pursuit of freedom. They include the following (Combat Names):

- a. Cde Barney ‘Mutle’ Molekoane
  - b. Cde Victor Mushvalue ‘Bra Vick’
  - c. Cde Mawiza ‘Piwe’
  - d. Cde Mainstay
  - e. Cde Buddybucks
  - f. Cde Sbephu
  - g. Cde Valdez
  - h. Cde Zandi
  - i. Cde Derrick
  - j. Cde Monari
  - k. Cde Matume
  - l. Cde James
  - m. Cde Danny Boy
  - n. Cde Eddie
  - m. Johnny Mashogo
  - o. Cde Refiloe
  - p. Cde Moshudie
  - q. Cde Rhawu
- and others I may have forgotten.

The last time I saw the above-mentioned fellow combatants of the MK Special Ops was in the village of Machava, Mozambique, after it was destroyed in the infamous Matola Raid in 1981 by the South African Security Forces. We lost 13 comrades. May their revolutionary spirit of no surrender live with us and may their souls rest in eternal peace.

Apart from the Special Ops Machinery, there were three other machineries that were based in Mozambique at the time. One was under the command of Cde Sphiwe Nyanda (combat name Cde Ghebhuza), a former Chief of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and Minister of Communication. It is unfortunate that only two comrades are left of the Special Ops Machinery: Cde Faku Musane, retired SANDF Brigadier General, and Cde Major Matyobeni, retired SANDF Colonel.

I would like to request fellow South Africans and compatriots to bear with me because I will deliberately mention names of comrades whom I met during the National Liberation Struggle, either in the bush or in prison. Some of them currently occupy senior positions of responsibility in our movement and in the ANC-led government. If any of them wishes to question the veracity of what I say about them, I would welcome further discussion.

Be assured that it is not at all intended for name-dropping. I will be doing so for the sake of objectivity in reflecting my personal struggle history. Importantly, I hope to highlight the glaring and terrible irreconcilability of that history with my current wretched economic state of affairs. In doing so, I will be guided by the words of Amilcar Cabral, a respected African revolutionary leader of the National Liberation Struggle of Guinea-Bissau when he said: ‘tell no lies and claim no easy victories....’ – a very prevalent widespread phenomenon during any revolutionary transition. Ours is not an exception.

Fortunately, those senior comrades mentioned in this book have always displayed integrity and adhered to the revolutionary ethics, morality and discipline that the ANC expects of its cadres. My judgment is that none of them is tainted by the current exposure of large-scale and abhorrent looting, fraud and corruption within the ranks of the movement.

If, while penning this background, I happen to emasculate the Queen’s language (English), please do forgive me because I will not be doing so deliberately. Perhaps I may be doing it subconsciously, rebelling against the language that is not my first language, but a colonial language imposed on our people by the white colonialist settlers. Again, bear with me if at times I do not dogmatically follow a particular sequence; for I am writing purely from my memory as I recall the events of many years in the past during the National Liberation Struggle. I have made a conscious effort to ensure that what I reflect

here is clearly understandable, openly frank, factual, and worth reading and pondering on.

I would really wish that this heartrending personal struggle history is accessed by as many South Africans as possible, so that they know that as far back as 1978, one of their sons at the tender school-going age of 16 years, was already a fully-fledged guerrilla of uMkhonto weSizwe. By then I had completed a gruelling six-month military guerrilla training course far away from home in the bush, jungle and mountains of the southern part of Angola. A comprehensive and intensive course that was referred to as a Commanders Course in the camp called Novakatenga, or Katenga as we used to call it. I took this action in response to a clarion call by the masses of our people to take up arms and fight against the recalcitrant, oppressive, brutal and dehumanising system of apartheid.

Mine was indeed a textbook example of child soldiering. Just imagine the heartache and trauma experienced by my parents when I just disappeared and left the country in pursuit of freedom. I was the apple of my parents' eyes, the youngest of eight siblings, six boys and two girls.

I have included a chapter on family cohesion. I am a firm believer in unity and harmony between a man and a woman within the context of romantic love affairs as well as in marital contractual bonds. These are rare and elusive under the current circumstances, characterised by large-scale absence of unity, peace and harmony, a skyrocketing divorce rate, dysfunctionality in family relations, and a sickening scourge of gender-based violence and femicide. I once discovered that there is a concept that is referred to as 'familyism.' I wonder why we cannot have familyists on both sides of the gender divide? They could potentially constitute a lobby group for parenting skills to become a component of the education curriculum. The family structure and institution are the most significant and fundamental basic unit and nucleus of society. Human beings are born, and families are created, resulting in the emergence and development of societies. It is likely that those who perpetrate gender-based violence and other horrible social ills in society, the majority of inmates in our jail cells, are products of parenting and upbringing that went horribly wrong.

Lenin<sup>2</sup> once said that:

*‘The art of any propagandist and agitator consists in his ability to find the best means of influencing any given audience, by presenting a definite truth in such a way as to make it most convincing, most easy to digest, most graphic and most impressive.’*

(Nimtz, 2014, p. 46).

# Personal background – the early years

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I was born on 5 October 1962, in New Brighton Location, Port Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup> I grew up in a close-knit working-class family, regularly attending the Sunday school of the Methodist Church, and wearing my favourite bellbottoms. As a young boy, I was expected to be home not later than seven o'clock, and not to miss the family prayers held daily. We were a typical, strict, nuclear, church-going and God-fearing family.

I started at my first school, Charles Duna Lower Primary School, situated about 150 metres from my home. To be honest, I hated school because we were subjected to corporal punishment. Nonetheless, I performed well, sometimes achieving top or second position in the class. Between 1970 and 1972, my parents took me to my original ancestral roots home that is in Fort Beaufort, referred to as *eBhofolo* in our isiXhosa vernacular. Most South Africans are familiar with a popular iconic song entitled, '*Kukude Bhofol indawo yamageza*'.<sup>4</sup> I attended Maqoma Lower Primary School in kwaDubu Village while I was residing at kwaGontsi. The two villages were separated by the river known as Umchathu and as a result during heavy rains we used to have difficulty crossing the river. Later, I attended Phillip Nikiwe Higher Primary School until Standard 4, when I went into exile. This ended my formal schooling in South Africa. In hindsight, I do not regret that at all. I did not miss anything substantial or decisive from a philosophical and intellectual perspective, given the inadequacies of 'Bantu' education.

To be honest, clear recollection of my personal life starts around 1969/70 when I was around the age of seven or eight years. Prior to that, I can recall nothing vividly and chronologically in terms of the conscious awareness of my socio-cultural, psychological, economic, and political surroundings. I can remember growing up as a fat young boy.

I was teased, to the extent that I was nicknamed 'Fats' at primary school. I was always in races against other boys of my age. It was a very awkward situation that used to impact negatively on my self-esteem. Perhaps that was a reason why I used to like working out both in boxing and playing soccer. In soccer I was nicknamed 'Chippa' in my street, after a former Kaiser Chiefs player 'Maestro'<sup>5</sup> who was also big physically. Maestro was aptly named because of his powerful dribbling soccer skills. Chiefs is currently my favourite team.

As a group of boys, at my age we were encouraged to train for boxing by those who were older than us, in the Centenary Hall near our home. We also had a street soccer team, like other streets in New Brighton. Our team was called Black Brothers, but we had no proper soccer ground around our area. We were lucky that we had a hall that was relatively well equipped with a library and recreational facilities for sporting codes such as boxing, judo, karate, weightlifting, dancing and indoor games.

The reason for my 'deportation' to the rural areas was apparently for my protection, based on my parents' perception that our New Brighton Township was beginning to be rough at the time. Indeed, there was a notorious gangster called 'Balaclavas.' I was also a fanatical player of dice and spinny where fights used to erupt. Of course, their assessment was spot on because, owing to peer pressure, I was beginning to experiment with some negative things like smoking cigarettes and sniffing benzene, or petrol from a bakkie at our friend's house in the neighbourhood. At times, during school holidays, we would drink alcohol, brandy ale, Ship Sherry and sometimes smoke dagga.

I could not sustain the habit of smoking dagga, especially when I was in the bush in exile at a later stage. In the camps in Angola the ANC/MK strictly prohibited the smoking of dagga and if you were found indulging in it, the punishment was severe. Apart from that, it made me easily scared and over-calculating, and therefore was not right for a guerrilla military operative who was at times expected to take risks.

In hindsight, this basically shows that you can be from a strict Christian family that instils discipline and good behaviour, as was the case with my family, and still be overwhelmed by the power of peer pressure and influence. In our black townships, the lack of recreational amenities and facilities makes it exceedingly difficult for a young person to escape negative influences. When a person reaches adolescence, he/she becomes very vulnerable because of an identity crisis and the

urge to belong and be accepted by peers. The emergence and impact of destructive societal sub-cultures such as dangerous gang formations, is greatest amongst impressionable youngsters.

As confirmation of what I am saying, go and visit the juvenile sections of prisons. You will see how overpopulated they are by that age group. My personal analysis is that a young person is far more likely to commit crime or involve himself in undesirable activities than is a person who is older and obligated by family responsibilities. A more mature individual has to think twice before doing anything reckless because he probably has a family to take care of. That is why it was extremely easy for me, at that age, to just disappear and leave the country for exile. Even in politics, the most loud-mouthed, radical and always ready to act, are the young generation. The older ones are more mature, measured, and risk-averse. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) are currently the loudest and most radical political party because they comprise a militant younger generation that is always ready to act. Hard to imagine that when I started my first military training in Angola 1978, Malema, Shivambu and Ndlozi had not yet been born! But when it comes to issues of the National Liberation Struggle, they can easily tell a person of my age to go to hell if they prevaricate, or appear not to know what they are talking about. Honestly though, I really do appreciate their existence as they keep complacent, overfed, and indecisive government bureaucrats on their toes.

In factories, before workers embark on a strike, they must think twice because they have children to feed and take care of at home. That is why there must be a lot of consultation by the unions before embarking on such action. For youth and students who are dependent on those very workers for survival, the situation is totally different because they have nothing to lose. Similarly, during our guerrilla warfare struggle it was youngsters like me who were in the front lines, on the ground. When I was in an operational situation, I was 20 years old and extremely dangerous, prepared to die because I had no wife and children to think of and worry about. The MK special operations machinery to which I belonged during our armed struggle, under the command of Cde Joe Slovo, was made up of young men. When you saw us, you could easily think that we were just a bunch of young members of a football club.

Karl Marx once said that the working class is the most disciplined and revolutionary social stratum in the society. It has an inherent capacity to lead the revolutionary struggle. The nature and well-structured process

of their work, especially in factory environments, necessitates perfect organisation and discipline for the handling of tools and machinery during the production process.<sup>6</sup> They are the social group that keeps society going, in spite of their being despised and undermined by their bosses and often paid slave wages. The wealth they create daily unfortunately benefits but the few.

My parents' decision to send me to a rural school was a good one, although in my teenage naivety at that time, I was not happy to go there. Here I am today with a solid background of having been a former disciplined and committed revolutionary, and a combatant of uMkhonto weSizwe, with sound but largely unrecognised struggle credentials. I succeeded in adapting to bush life in MK Camps in Angola owing *inter alia* to my rural background. I am now intellectually capacitated by the very struggle to write and reflect as I do. Regrettably however, I am financially broke and plagued by unresolved grievances and complaints.

As parents we should be vigilant when it comes to our children, particularly when they reach a certain age and phase that is characterised by confusion and identity crisis. In a conscious and deliberate way, we must continually keep the channels of communication with them open, lest we end up with a delinquent who indulges in undesirable activities without our knowing. This is irrespective of the socioeconomic status of the parents, as demonstrated by the misdemeanours of the children of some of our cabinet ministers. Whether we like it or not, the children of today are the future of any country. Whether that future is to be bright, or broken, largely depends on how we as parents raise them. These days even the schools that are supposed to be trustworthy custodians of good morals and value systems are no longer safe, as we can see for ourselves in the media. Additionally, on our TV screens our children are frequently bombarded by debauchery. The absence of role models for them to emulate is of great concern. Daily exposure to glamour and glitter stokes envy and materialistic aspirations, characterised by an obsession with money at the expense of education and a sense of humanness. These days, many of our children aspire to such careers as a rap artist, who sings a song today that is forgotten three months later. In the meantime they become filthy rich because of an ability to press the right buttons or to trade sexual favours in order to be signed-on and well-placed. Inappropriate TV soapies and movies precipitate youthful short-cuts to wealth, at the expense of education and healthy social pursuits.



I was the youngest of eight siblings in the family, with five able-bodied brothers older than me. It was known in our street that I had immensely powerful protection, particularly when indulging in my favourite hobby of playing dice and spinny. Our family was devastated when Bhut Sizwe, one of my elder brothers, the sweetest of all, was stabbed to death in 1972, when I was in Fort Beaufort. The apartheid justice system appeared to facilitate stabbing, killing and murder amongst Black African people in the townships, by its failure to ensure legal consequences. It often used to be common knowledge in a neighbourhood when an individual had stabbed someone to death, he would be seen but not arrested, thereby enhancing simultaneously his notoriety and the level of fear in his community.

Consequently, when political activities began to take place in the townships during the '70s and '80s, anti-crime committees were created to curb gratuitous criminality. Community vigilantism emerged and is perpetuated to this day in reaction to police dragging their feet in arresting criminals. Is there a mind-set of dragging feet with respect to black on black violence, as in the past? A notion that 'black life is cheap'? Shortly before I left for exile in 1978, a notorious criminal known and feared in our neighbourhood became one of the first victims of mob-justice. He was 'necklaced' and while he burnt, people were ululating in celebration.

During my time in Fort Beaufort I learnt the origins of my family and the rural way of life, which was very conservative compared to life in a township. I regarded rural life as boring compared to the township, yet in hindsight, it helped me become a more balanced person. How else would I have discovered that cow dung could be used for polishing the floor of a hut and that this polish smells genuinely nice? In isiXhosa this process is called *Ukurhida* and *Ukusinda*. One of many insights I gained as a rural inhabitant.

During the time, almost all Black African people who were staying in townships in urban areas had moved from rural areas, including my own parents. Migration from rural to urban areas for better opportunities has occurred continually since the land dispossession. Colonial theft and plunder forced mass abandonment of rural areas. Migrants sold their labour power at a cheap price to colonists. The Land Act of 1913, allocated just 13% of land in the form of 'Bantu Stands' to Black Africans. This law constituted the institutionalisation of a well-orchestrated process over many years. Similarly, the consolidation and

statutorisation of racial discrimination, and resultant dehumanisation of Black Africans by the National Party in 1948, built on foundations that had been in existence for centuries.

My late father and mother were born in 1916 and 1922 respectively. They were staunch adherents to both African tradition and Christianity. Hence, I grew up regularly attending Methodist Church Sunday school. My father was a typical African traditionalist who was also deeply religious. As an elder preacher in the Methodist Church, he was adept at preaching the gospel. I used to be impressed by his oratory skills when adjudicating family traditional matters. He worked in a factory that used to be called Bus Bodies.

When there were matters of a traditional nature or even for domestic issues in the family, he would normally be called upon for solutions. He was one of the most senior members of our clan, and a Custodian of the Clan norms and rituals of Ooleta, Oolibele, Oomboyi, Ootyebelendle and Ookhwangeshe. He was called uTatu Nkuse. Consequently, I was given the nickname 'uNyana ka Tatu Nkuse' (the son of Father Nkuse) especially by my paternal relatives. Although there are innumerable Khayas in South Africa and even a Khaya FM radio station, I can assert with some pride that I have never heard of another Nkuse anywhere in South Africa. I also find it very strange that of all my siblings, I am the only one who was not given an English name; a so-called Christian name, which was nothing but a colonial name so that the 'Master' would be able to pronounce it.

Within our household my father would only occupy about 30% of the space metaphorically speaking; he preferred to keep a low profile at home. He allowed my mother to take a leadership role. Nonetheless, publicly he would assume a leadership position and would always be called on to play a counselling role in the community. In some households, especially within the family circle, women would call an obstinate and aggressive male chauvinist husband 'uTatu Nkuse.' My father had his finger cut for ritual purposes (in Xhosa it is called *Inqgithi*). He would usually travel with me to Fort Beaufort, Alice, or Grahamstown (where other extended family members were based) to facilitate traditional ceremonies. He was highly respected by other old timers of the family. Unsurprisingly therefore, when I was released from Robben Island Prison in 1991, my going to the initiation school was prioritised so that I could adhere to my Xhosa traditional ritual. He took me to Alice for the ritual *Ukweluka*. When I returned from the ritual for *Umgidi* it felt like a rally with people

all over the street. At the time we were called cadres and highly respected by communities. At one point a taxi driver did not want me to pay the fare. It was his way of showing appreciation and solidarity. He had seen my photo on the front page of a local newspaper, the *Post*. My homecoming from initiation school resembled my April 1991 return from a thirteen-year exile. Locals were excited to see the safe return of someone who had disappeared at such a young and tender age.

My father was a well-built man who did not drink alcohol but smoked a tobacco that was referred to as 'Horseshoe.' I mostly happened to be the one who was sent to buy it, but I never inhaled smoke beyond my mouth. Whenever a cow was slaughtered for a family event and he was a facilitator, I would not be sent away with the other boys of my age as per traditional procedure. I would be allowed to stand next to him.

Our family comprised two girls and six boys. I had five elder brothers who used to be disciplined by my father with a stick. However, he never lifted a hand or shouted at me, whereas my mother used to subject me to corporal punishment using a flop (slipper). The only other one who used to 'klap' me, especially when my parents were not around, was Bhut Vuyisile (who died in 2020). He was the only one of my siblings I did not like very much. My mother would instruct him to stop abusing me physically, and that he should have his own children to discipline.

In our culture we always prefix the names of those who are older than us by saying *Bhuti* before the name of a male or *Sisi*, in the case of a female. *Tata* or *Mama* were applied for our elders. As a spoilt last-born (*Untondo*) I was the only child at home who was sometimes allowed, mostly by my mother, to drink from the whole bottle of milk (called Sterimilk), although it had been bought for household use.

My mother was a homemaker who used to ensure that everything was up to standard in the household. She was a cleanliness fanatic to the extent that she used to make it a point that everyone in the family had his/her own household task. My main task was to polish the *stoep* with a red polish which was quite a messy job. At times I would be called from playing in the street to be told that my household chore had not yet been done. It had to be done whether I liked it or not. When polishing, I used to look around so that I was not seen by the girls around the street. (Indeed, I had an affair with one of the girls that ended up as a platonic relationship without having been consummated.) Growing up, I was not interested in girls because of my introverted nature. This contrasted with my immediate older brother whose name is Boy. He used to change

girlfriends frequently. He slept outside the main house in what used to be referred to as a cabin. In contrast, when I left for exile aged 15 years, I was 'almost' a virgin but at least did have a horizontal encounter that was not really a success from a sexual perspective, as per my later informal 'studies.'

On payday my father would give me his envelope containing his wages. I had to give it to my mother. With the limited resources, all the necessary household needs were met with additional contributions from those of my siblings who were working. If my memory serves me well, his weekly wages were around R19 paid weekly every Friday. The highest value bank note at the time was R10. With R5 or R10 one could purchase the family groceries at local shops. Most Black African families at the time ate a staple diet of no meat and a lot of vegetables from Monday to Saturday. Hence there emerged in our communities a concept of 'seven colours' that was only available on Sundays when there was more opportunity to eat well and enjoy a wider range of colourful meat and vegetables and puddings. I remember that 22 cents covered admission to a bioscope (12 cents) and a meal (hot dog, 8 cents; 'Groovy' cold drink, 2 cents). In New Brighton, the favourite venue for movies was a building called Rio. It was located in Aggrey Street, the same street as our Family Methodist Church. In the same street was a shop called KK that specialised in delicious hot-dogs.

I had a close friend Chiko Mzozoyane who used to sell liquor at his home. We would steal a case of beer bottles from his place and sell them to raise the admission fee for movies, each beer bottle for 2 cents. The price of a loaf of bread was 12 cents; and if you preferred half, it would be cut and cost 6 cents. A loose cigarette cost 2 cents, with 10 or 20 cigarettes for 11 cents and 21 cents respectively. A return ticket to and from Uitenhage where I had relatives, cost only 28 cents. Fat cakes, livers, chicken feet and chicken head that were popular with students at 1 or 2 cents. Just 10 or 20 cents for lunch at school was sufficient for a whole meal and a 300ml Kool-Aid drink. At our Lower Primary schools, a daily feeding scheme distributed sour milk (amasi) and biscuits (Pyotts). We were required to carry cups which we tied on our belts (boys) or girdles (girls).

During those times we were not talking about rands but cents. Nevertheless, life was not cheap and affordable. The majority of Black Africans were poverty-stricken, with no access to basic services. At that time a teacher was one of the most respected and feared people in the

community. Our parents used to let teachers and *Izibonda* of the area take care of the disciplining. They mostly preferred corporal punishment to persuasion. In police stations, a person alleged to have committed a crime, was sometimes deemed a delinquent and eligible to be lashed.

Much later, during 1982 when I was in the operational area around Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal) as an underground MK guerrilla operative, I had in my possession an amount of R10 000 that I could not put in my pocket. The highest bank note at that time was R20, just imagine how many R20 notes constituted that R10 000? I had to carry it in my sling bag. At the hotel where we took refuge as ‘businessmen’, not far from eUlundi where Gatsha Buthelezi’s government buildings were based, it cost us R49 per night. It was an unbelievably beautiful hotel at which Buthelezi used to host important ceremonies. I attended one of those ceremonies and when I was arrested in October 1982, the media reported Buthelezi’s claim that the ANC wanted to assassinate him. The allegation was refuted by Cde Alfred Nzo, the then ANC Secretary General.

Currently in my house, even though my wife Mathabo is not working, she manages the funds and takes care of the household needs, as happened with my parents in my childhood home. My mother was an extraordinarily strong woman who did not mince her words. She was nicknamed ‘*uNoqgwashu*.’ My father used to call her by her marital customary name ‘Nonyaniso.’ She used to make a point of having fresh flowers in the vase on the table at home. During special occasions, when she was in her element, she would wear a fur coat and white gloves. She was light in complexion, almost a ‘Yellow Bone’ according to the current jargon. My father was dark in complexion. In hindsight, my mother was an urbanite who liked beautiful things. My mother was also a dressmaker who used to sew ‘*Izishweshwe*’ for her clients. My father was a typical traditionalist.

Every New Year’s Day as a family we would go and camp on the beach and feast with other family friends of my mother, who used to refer to her as *uMamaKhaya* (Khaya’s Mother); others called her by her name Sis Geyina.

Like any working-class family at the time, it was a norm to have a colourful dish for Sunday lunch, including pudding, that is currently called ‘seven colours.’ During the recent glamorous show of *Johannesburg Housewives* on TV, I witnessed Black African ladies laughing at a white lady when she did not understand the meaning of ‘seven colours.’ They seem to have forgotten that white people in South

Africa used to have seven colours on a daily basis. As a result, it was not a big deal for them.

White South Africans were said to be the most spoilt minority group in the world who over-indulged in over-nutritious food without being physically active. As a result, they were ranked the highest in terms of having high blood pressure and related ailments as a social group. That makes a lot of sense because during the time; as ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’<sup>7</sup> Black African people were always there to ensure that ‘Basie’ or ‘Madam’ were not to do work that required physical exertion; be it either at work or at home. Even legislation such as the Job Reservation Act was enacted for that specific purpose. I think most white South Africans can never be comfortable with the current arrangement of a Black African person being in power and their privileges curtailed.

My mother was a domestic worker in a suburb called Newton Park in Port Elizabeth. She once proudly introduced me as her last born to the couple for whom she was working. They were nice in a very genuine way. I remember vividly that my mother was so happy in her work environment and had a particularly good rapport with them. In hindsight, I doubt that they were Afrikaners because at the time liberalism among Afrikaners was exceedingly rare. My perception was that a typical Afrikaner (Boer) family would not have tolerated their domestic worker proudly introducing her son to them. Many Boers, in spite of being our fellow countryman and compatriots, are sick with racial prejudice.

In fact, it was quite normal for my mother to introduce me proudly as her last born ‘*Untondo*’ to most of the people she met when I happened to be around. She really loved me so much and used to be so proud of me. I will always miss her. When I was in prison on Robben Island during the 1980s, she was the only one who visited me consistently. She once bought me an exceptionally beautiful wrist watch, knowing my soft spot for accessories such as wrist watches and sunglasses. I regret that while she was still alive, I was as financially unstable (as I still am currently) and not able to fund a simple birthday party or gift for her. That is a result of being marginalised and deprived of a decent income by my own comrades. She passed on in 2009 at the age of 89 years. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

When I was in the National Liberation Struggle, I learnt that those who once lived in the rural areas were more likely to easily adapt in the guerrilla warfare struggle in the bush than those who had never

lived the rural life. Revolutionary movements like the ANC can boast of many leaders with a rural background,<sup>8</sup> providing them with first-hand experience of wretchedness and lack of opportunities. Things like not having access to basic services such as electricity, clean and running water and sanitation, easy access to medical care, and having to walk long distances to attend school.

Perhaps for me, my Fort Beaufort (Bhofolo) background was among the reasons why I managed to adapt and survived the difficult bush life in Angola. In Fort Beaufort I used to hunt with a self-made sling. In Angola I was also a hunter and marksman; perhaps history was repeating itself. I should think, in later life, it stands one in good stead to have a rural background, particularly for one's children's sake. When you happen to have your own family, you know what to do as an African when it comes to traditional ritual and custom and ceremony.

## CHAPTER 2

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# Political baptism and militancy

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On Saturday 7 August 1976, a Bantamweight boxing title fight between Norman 'Pangaman' Sekgapane of Johannesburg and Nkosana Mgxaji took place in the Great Centenary Hall in New Brighton Location, Port Elizabeth, which was only a stone's throw away from my home. In Port Elizabeth, we love boxing, so the hall was filled, with even more people outside desperately pushing to get inside to watch the fight. While the fight was in progress, a riot erupted, some cars were burnt and police arrived at the scene firing teargas. On the following Monday, in the early hours of the morning, we were woken by a loud and aggressive knock on the door of our home. Land Rovers and police in brown camouflage were all over the place. They arrested my brother and we later learnt that he was accused of having been one of the instigators of that riot.

What basically struck me most about that raid was that I had never in my life seen my parents, particularly my father, in such a weak and vulnerable position. In appealing to the goodwill of the young white policemen in brown camouflage uniform, he referred to them as 'Basie, Basie.' I was sick with anger but was helpless and could do nothing. Growing up I always had great respect for my parents. In the surrounding community they were respected and held in high esteem, and well regarded in the local Methodist Church, where both were given a decent burial befitting of respectable elders in the community when they passed on. Now suddenly, they were undermined, belittled and stripped of their dignity by stupid, young, white racist boys in brown police camouflage. Young enough to be their grandchildren.

With trumped-up charges, my brother was sentenced in the Supreme Court of Grahamstown to seven years' imprisonment. With other co-accused, after sentencing, they were sent to Robben Island Prison. I say



‘trumped-up charges’ because during that commotion, he was with me at the boxing match and had commanded me to go home for my own safety. I was not asked to be a witness in my brother’s trial, but even at that young age of ignorance and political naïvety, I knew my brother could not have been involved in that riot.

In hindsight, that situation of witnessing my parents whom I respected so much subjected to that type of humiliation, galvanised my politicisation and radicalisation. It prompted me to embrace Black Consciousness as a philosophy and to love with passion the freedom song that was popular at the time entitled, *‘Amabhulu Zizinja Ayakufa Ezizinja.’*<sup>9</sup> That also led me to mastering the formula for making a petrol bomb.

I remember, around the December festive season of 1977, being with my small unit of three, after having been told by our friend, the late Cde Mita, that he had a reliable contact that could enable us to leave the country for exile. Cde Mita was at that time a politically enlightened matric student who was actively involved in student political activities. We decided on some last operations before we left the country. We referred to them as ‘Operation Pull-out.’ While busy selecting targets for burning in New Brighton on a cool Sunday afternoon, we entered a house in Zondi Street. There were several cars parked outside and the house was full of people who were older than us (in township lingo *‘grootmans’* and *‘susters.’* They were nicely dressed, enjoying themselves drinking and playing beautiful music, seemingly enjoying the festive season. We entered the house stern-faced and stopped their party. We asked one of them to come outside with us so that we could syphon petrol with a pipe from one of the cars into an empty gallon container we were carrying. Our request to them was more of a command because we were angry that they were enjoying themselves while we were busy with the struggle.

The people in the house fortunately obliged without resistance. They knew how unpredictable and merciless comrades of the so-called Black Power could become at the time. There were four of us. With me were the late Cde Mlungwana, Cde Khaya (my namesake) and Cde Litha. The latter confidently waved a pistol. He had a brave, no-nonsense attitude, emboldened by his previous dangerous and risky operations. We did not even know at the time how he got hold of the pistol, but knew that his brother was a boxing promoter. I imagine he obtained the pistol through his boxing contacts.

Perhaps because of that military capability, we preferred to carry out our operations as a close-knit small unit, with no intention of recruiting to expand it. More so, there was already a large group of comrades with whom we used to operate, that had already left the country for exile during the last quarter of 1977. I later joined this group, known as the Moncada<sup>10</sup> Detachment, in the south of Angola in March 1978. There was a time whenever Litha fired a shot, I used to wonder naively what was released from the side of the pistol. At a later stage during my military training when I got to know weapons, I learnt that it was an empty cartridge case.

When a plan to leave the country was proposed, Cde Litha stubbornly refused. He tried to convince us to stay, saying we must fight the enemy inside the country and disarm the police. At the time I wanted nothing other than to leave the country, perhaps subconsciously with the intention of shooting those young policemen. The main organiser Cde Mita was not practically involved in our sometimes mischievous operations. In fact, those of us who were actively involved in burning and creating havoc in the Port Elizabeth area, rather than just holding meetings, were referred to as an Action Committee. Hence, one of my tasks at the time was to create petrol bombs. Personally, I felt that at that stage we were beginning to lose impact. The situation in the communities was normalising, students were attending schools and student protests had stopped.

During that period I was no longer sleeping at home in New Brighton. Our base as we used to call it was Red Location (Elalini). That township had houses that were made up of zinc (corrugated iron). It was a typical 'ghetto' that had had a bucket system for sewage disposal. There were no tarred roads nor any other infrastructure. We used it as a launching pad for our operations because, apart from the fact that we had overwhelming support from the local community, it was not easy for the police to navigate. The houses were constructed in a train coach-like format and were mostly plastered with newspapers as ornamental wallpapers. Just imagine the inside of the house with newspapers all over the walls, very confusing indeed. Inside one house was a trapdoor you could hardly see amid the newspapers, that would lead you underground, as well as to other houses. Under the houses it was so spacious that one could literally stand upright. That is where I used to manufacture the petrol bombs for operations, using empty Ship sherry bottles.

We left Cde Litha Mlahleki behind after he refused to go with us in 1978. While I was in Angola, I heard that he was in Tanzania. Our next meeting was five years later on Robben Island in 1983, where he was serving 45 years. By then he was a staunch member of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).

Among the few individuals in Port Elizabeth who knew that we were going to skip the country, excluding our families, was the late Cheeky Watson. The Watson family owned an extremely popular shop that was known as 'Dan Watson.' It specialised in very fashionable and stylish men's clothing. They used to be incredibly supportive and provided us with free clothing from time to time. As a result, when we carried out our operations, we were well-dressed and hardly looked suspicious. Furthermore, we did not drink alcohol during our operations. I regarded the Watson family as a rare breed, the most progressive whites I had ever known. Hence, when we told them that we were leaving the country, we were confident that they would never sell us out to the Special Branch.

The instruction that was communicated by Cde Mita to us, was that we were not to carry money, take clothes or carry luggage; indeed, we just left with what we were wearing. Our journey by train from Port Elizabeth to Johannesburg Park Station was smooth. In the train we were accompanied by a tall guy who bought tickets for us. Strangely, during the journey he just sat there away from us, not communicating at all, but ensuring that whatever we wanted logistically was provided. I was a smoker at the time, so I was looked after. When we arrived in Johannesburg and were taken to the safe house in Diepkloof Zone 2, the man disappeared. Others were waiting for us, and we formed a group with them before we skipped the country. We were given a lift to Johannesburg Park Station, where we boarded a train heading for the Eastern Transvaal. After several hours we were told to leave the train at Piet Retief Station. From there we had a long and tiring walk towards the Swaziland border. In our group was Marry Mini, a great-granddaughter of the ANC stalwart who was hanged during the 1960s by the apartheid regime.<sup>11</sup> Others were Constance (a lady comrade), Dan Hato, Major Matyobeni, the late Mxolisi Mamba and the three of us. At the border we climbed over a fence and entered Swaziland. The tall guy from the train reappeared in Swaziland and accompanied us across the border from Swaziland to Mozambique at midnight. He was now carrying something that I later recognised as an AK-47 rifle. Our stay in Swaziland, Mozambique and Zambia was short. In Zambia we stayed only three days, literally indoors.

In all the countries we passed through, the first thing we were required to do was to write our biography and be questioned about our past. For me at the age of 15 years, there was not much I could write about. The form I had to fill in was full of no, no, no or not applicable, N/A. I remember in some parts of the form, the questions would be things like ‘Have you ever been a member of a trade union?’ and ‘Have you ever been a member of a student movement?’ ‘Have you ever been involved in the ANC underground activities?’ Imagine, I did not even know what a trade union or the ANC were about. All I used to tell them was that I was there to get an AK-47, go back to South Africa and fight the apartheid system. That is how innocent and politically naïve I was. It cannot be said that I was illiterate, because that word is a social construct that is only applicable to adults who cannot read or write and cannot attend a normal schooling system due to the socioeconomic and political circumstances of a political system.

Indeed, frankly speaking, what could be expected from a 15-year-old naïve boy who was supposed to be at school? I was an adolescent boy who had dropped out of schooling in Standard 4 because of the rotten political system of apartheid. To respond to a brutal and oppressive system like apartheid, you did not necessarily have to be a schooled individual to experience the social conditions of an oppressive system. It was something that you felt psychologically, in your deep soul and self – that something was not right at all. It was something that surrounded you on a continuous basis, 24/7. It was subconsciously reflected even on the haggard faces of Black African people around you, including your own parents. When they came back from work after being belittled, dehumanised and stripped of their dignity as a domestic worker and a garden boy by racists they called ‘Basie’ or ‘Madam.’

What I am saying is clearly exemplified by the iconic photo of Hector Pieterse being carried after being shot dead during the 16 June, 1976 uprising. An award winner in *Time Magazine*. Another is the photo of an angry young Palestinian boy captured throwing a stone with a slingshot in Gaza. That boy did not have to go to school to recognise the brutality that was being meted out against his parents and the Palestinian people by the Israeli government. He did not have to go to school to know and understand that the Palestinian people were being dehumanised, brutalised, and treated like sub-human-beings by the oppressive Israeli government.

The brutal, oppressive, and dehumanising nature of apartheid on the social material conditions of Black African people in South

Africa, engendered a mindset of rage, frustration, powerlessness and uneasiness, even amongst some of us as adolescents, deprived of access to opportunities. The situation invoked a state of mind that precipitated justifiable militant revolt and destruction of the brutal fascist apartheid system. My sole intention in leaving the country at the time was basically to go and get the AK-47 we had always heard about, and to fight the system. The angry youngsters who left the country shortly after the 1976 uprising, did so for the same purpose. It is not surprising that in the Middle East, poor socioeconomic and material conditions drive young Palestinians to join the Liberation Struggle and even to become suicide bombers. To be subjected to oppression and dehumanisation by the apartheid regime was really sickening to the core.

We passed through the countries I have mentioned with a sense of urgency. We were joined by a large group in Matola, Mozambique, where we were each given combat names and asked whether we wanted to go to school or for military training. This was because, in Angola, there was a group that was waiting for us, so that we could all start the training as a solid group, that would constitute a detachment. This was named by Cde O.R. as 'Moncada Detachment' at the graduation, after six months of military training. The detachment included a group that had left Port Elizabeth before us, in the last quarter of 1977.

# Current reflections

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Here I am today, at the age of 58 years, with only two years left before retirement, 26 years into our democratic dispensation for which I sacrificed and fought so hard. I am under-ranked in the SANDF. I salute soldiers who are young enough to be my children, who hardly have the slightest idea as to how this country reached this freedom and democracy. I still struggle to make ends meet. It is unimaginable that former MK veterans and operatives, who served this country with loyalty and dedication as far back as 40 years ago or more, are still struggling to make ends meet.

Empathise with me and put yourself in my shoes. Imagine my heartache and frustration at seeing some of the comrades alongside whom I struggled in the bush of Angola and Robben Island Prison, who now live in luxury. In contrast to my situation, they are now enjoying material benefits such as beautiful houses and cars, sometimes even cars for their children. For a while my escape was alcohol. Fortunately, I deliberately stopped smoking and drinking alcohol, otherwise, that would have added to my family's financial woes. I have concluded that drinking alcohol to relieve stress is inadvisable. The proliferation of township taverns and shebeens, often several in a single street, are a response to the social needs of residents. They serve as recreational centres where we gather to socialise, network, make friends and even fall in love. In fact, I met Mathabo Semoli, in a tavern in 1992, not long before she became my wife. Mathabo had a young daughter Zandile, who was to become my step-daughter.

Despite providing the opportunity for social engagement, the danger is that taverns can become centres of alcohol addiction. Had I still been drinking, I could not have embarked on the important and serious

exercise of reflecting on my struggle background. It has been emotionally draining. If you want to disappoint your detractors and doomsayers, avoid alcohol. Make a point of looking clean and being positive when you are out, particularly in their company. Most importantly, read a lot about the politics of our revolution, especially Marxism-Leninism. Focus on ensuring that you have a coherent and happy family. Exert effort to ensure that your children are happy, emotionally balanced and pursuing their education. Do not lose hope and become reactionary and anti-ANC. The movement has nothing to do with your individual plight, it is politically and ideologically immature individuals who lack comradeship. Be a revolutionary optimist and spread a word of hope even to those who want to destroy you. Despite their material possessions and glamorous lifestyles, those individuals might be even less hopeful than you.

In 2000, when we were staying with my family in a flat in Sunnyside, my detractors nearly succeeded in their mission of seeing me down and out. I used to drink heavily. In fact, I was almost an alcoholic. I do not know how many times I was arrested and slept in the Sunnyside Police Station cells to sober up because of being verbally abusive towards Mathabo when I was drunk. For me to discontinue the negative tendency, I had to have a serious conversation with myself. Deliberate introspection led to behavioural change and self-transformation.

We have a daughter, Siphesihle (aged 27 years at the time of writing), a postgraduate student who is intending to pursue her master's degree. My hope is that she pursues her tertiary academic studies to the highest level possible. Perhaps a specialist researcher and producer of ideas. For young Black African postgraduate students, especially women, career paths are uncharted terrain. The economic circumstances of an average Black African parent fosters an expectation that their children will one day support them. This is an expectation resulting from the bourgeoisification of family relations in the capitalist mode of production. At a certain age the usefulness and value of a child in the family is judged in terms of what she/he brings home materially.<sup>12</sup>

Siphesihle has now decided to look for employment. She is a highly intelligent young woman who intends to pursue her master's degree in International Politics, specialising in Political Economy whilst being employed. She completed and graduated twice under the tutorship of the University of Pretoria, against all odds, and much to the disquietude and chagrin of our doomsayers, detractors, and sideliners. As a family we are

hoping that she will continue with her studies while in employment. At the time of writing, she is awaiting a response from the University of South Africa (UNISA) to her research proposal pertaining to BRICS.<sup>13</sup> We are so proud of her commitment, resilience and resultant achievements. An African idiom, '*Uthixo akakuvimbi yonke into*' loosely translated means, 'God does not deprive you of everything.' I do count my blessings. For indeed there are people out there who are in worse situations than I am, particularly those with children they cannot afford to feed, who end up going to bed with nothing in their stomachs. Mandela once said that:

It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.<sup>14</sup>

Children of the wealthy sometimes end up as delinquents living lives of debauchery and drug addiction. Money is not everything, but education is everything.

I had the privilege of attending Siphesihle's BA and Honours degree graduations. I hope to attend the third one soon. What an exciting, serene, and honourable occasion to see your child in the company of academics, being bestowed with prestigious honours. It is fortunate that the possession of grey matter and intelligence is not something reserved for the wealthy. Otherwise, they would have surrounded it with high, electrified walls, monopolised it and kept it as far away as possible from the wretched poor masses, the way they do with their material possessions. Children from middle class and well-off backgrounds are in an advantageous position in the schooling system, compared with us who are at the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. It is often children from wealthier backgrounds who disappoint their parents. Abused privilege can result in debauchery and materialism.

Siphesihle completed her BA degree without a laptop of her own. At one stage, she was forced to take a gap year owing to lack of funds. Ironically, against all odds, she obtained matric exemption at Glen High School in Pretoria East. I was not able to host a single party to incentivise her. Thankfully, she understands the economic situation of her parents and takes it in her stride. We hope to remedy this gap in the future as she



works towards a career, perhaps in the area of international relations.

Despite everything, I do not have even the slightest regret about having been part of the revolutionary struggle and the noble cause that was led by the ANC. This I will cherish until the day I cease to breathe and function. Nicolai Ostrofsky, a young revolutionary in the Russian Civil War said:

Man's dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying, he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the Liberation of Mankind.<sup>15</sup>

Mandela built on this sentiment, 'What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.'<sup>16</sup> Of course, I do not feel any torturing regrets. For the better part of my life as a revolutionary and freedom fighter was dedicated to fighting for freedom and a just cause. Those years were not wasted. Thankfully, I do not at all know the burning shame of a mean and petty past.

To steal from one of Mathabo's favourite English expressions, 'I rise in thorns and remain unruffled.' From time to time, I do 'steal' from her with an acknowledgement to avoid plagiarism. While schooling in Lesotho she passed her Junior Certificate and Matric – not Bantu Education but a Cambridge O Levels Senior Certificate (COSC) with many As and Bs. Within that context, she was an ace when it came to Maths, Physics and Chemistry (Integrated Sciences) and studied English and its Literature. I had never seen such a powerful Matric Certificate before. That is why, when I met her in 1991 after my release from Robben Island, I could see she was totally different from the average South African at that level. She is logical, humble and adaptable, behavioural traits of a product of the British Education System. I had wished for a partner from whom I could learn a thing or two, a person capable of adapting to both worlds that exist in our country: the First and the Third World. I wanted a partner who would be able to understand the qualitative differences between social classes; their psychological make-up, and the strengths and weaknesses that are rooted in their socioeconomic circumstances. The material

conditions of their existence that are at times beyond the level of their understanding and comprehension because of self-deception and false consciousness occasioned *inter alia* by the apartheid capitalist socioeconomic and political system.

When I met Mathabo, I began to realise more and more that the Bantu Education System was indeed inferior, its products leaving much to be desired. It was unfortunate that she used to be misunderstood because of her liberated mind and carefreeness by my close friends and comrades, even my own family. They tended to think deceptively that their judgment was accurate, although unsubstantiated, and at times, delusional and naïve.

At a subconscious level they might have thought that other people are as gullible as they are, accepting information without verification. I have realised that most people in our country are prone to gullibility and self-deception because of the education system that prevailed during the apartheid era. It was not surprising that, when the church building where Nigerian prophet TB Joshua preached, collapsed, 84 of the 112 fatalities were South Africans. Similarly, a journalist, who went to Malawi to investigate the origin of the prophet Bushiri, was surprised to learn that he was very unpopular and referred to as a fake. In contrast, in South Africa, he was hailed as a hero, and became filthy rich. Another so-called prophet in Port Elizabeth, who groomed and raped young girls in his congregation, won considerable support from members of his community during his trial. These are some examples of how gullible our Black African communities have become. But we cannot blame them: they are who they are because of the rotten system of the past.

The anger and bitterness I harbour is not against the Movement, but against the individuals who purport to be gatekeepers – those who project an image of people who are more committed ANC members than others, and are hell bent on side-lining and marginalising other comrades for reasons that are beyond one's knowledge. They have contributed to the current factionalism and political paralysis. They seem oblivious that their behaviour assists the detractors and counter-revolutionary elements of the organisation. It is unbecoming of a genuine cadre of the ANC/MK. Cde Derrick McBride (father of Cde Robert McBride) once said that a comrade who does not show compassion towards another comrade is a 'terrorist.' Perhaps the ANC should add an anti-terrorism clause in its constitution and slap a banning order on them.

Anyway, as a person who grew up in a Christian family I strongly believe in forgiveness. I forgive them; as our icon Cde Rolihlahla Mandela once succinctly put it, 'Forgiving liberates the soul.' That is why it is not my intention here to stoop so low as to name and shame individuals. I internalised the principles, political goals, and objectives of our movement and will never abandon it. African Revolutionary leader of the National Liberation Struggle of Guinea-Bissau, Cde Amilcar Cabral correctly said, 'Always bear in mind that the people *are* not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children.'<sup>17</sup>

With challenges acknowledged, I still strongly believe that the ANC is the only organisation in this country that has the political will and ideological capacity to take this society forward to its ultimate political and economic emancipation. There is still a long way to go in terms of cleansing the Movement of rotten elements that are committed to enriching themselves by corrupt means at the expense of the poorest of the poor Black African masses. We still do not have a viable alternative party that can be said, with certainty, to be an authentic representative of the oppressed majority. Again, I voted for the ANC on the 8 May 2019 with my family. For how could I be expected to vote otherwise?

## CHAPTER 4

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# Exile

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From 1978 to 1982, during my transition from the tender age of 15 years to a more mature 20 years, my home was in camps in the bush and jungle of southern and northern Angola. These were named Kibachi, Novakatenga, Pango, Cartito (Funda) and Viana. The latter entailed a very brief period in 1981, for a classified special project under the auspices of the Special Operations Machinery. Additionally, I spent part of 1981 in a military camp, Pereval in Simferopol, Crimea.<sup>18</sup>

I once listened to the former Honourable Minister of Small Business Development, Cde Lindiwe Zulu, saying that when she left the country aged 19 years, she was advised and encouraged by Cde Moses Mabhida (late General Secretary of the Communist Party and member of the ANC National Executive Committee) to go to school abroad since she was still young. She went to the Soviet Union for academic studies and ultimately obtained a master's degree in journalism. I really respect and salute her for joining MK in the bush in Angola after completing her studies. She was under no obligation to do so.

Unfortunately, while I was in the bush in Angola, I was never one of the lucky ones who happened to be sent to school for academic studies abroad or even to a party school. Ironically, at the age of 15 years, I was advised and encouraged to go to school. I might have looked older and more mature than a 15-year-old. In Matola in 1978 we were given combat names and the choice of military training or school. I chose the former. While I was there, I met two ANC NEC members, whom I later got to know – the late Cde Joe Modise, the Commander in Chief of MK at the time and the late Cde Amos Masondo, the MK National Commissar.

I first met the late Cde Peter Mokaba in 1980 in Funda Camp, Cartito, Angola. He was a committed cadre of the movement. Together with us in

the trenches was another future Cabinet Minister Cde Collins Chabane. We were aware that death was always a possibility. Cde Peter spoke only Sepedi when he was not using English. Initially he was noticeably quiet and in hindsight I realise that his command of isiZulu, the common denominator and lingua franca in our camps, was poor. He would only speak when there was a formal political discussion in English. But as a brilliant comrade he quickly learnt to adapt to the common language. When I met him in Robben Island Prison in 1983 in E-Section he was fluent. Few comrades in the revolutionary struggle were of the calibre of comrades Peter Mokaba and Chris Hani. We met again in 1992 when he addressed students at the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) when he was President of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO). Mathabo and I were staying in the student village of the PE Technicon at the time. He invited me to visit him in Berea, Johannesburg the following year. I was surprised to discover that Cde Peter had a brother who looked almost identical to him, as if they were twins. May his spirit live on, especially among the youth and his soul rest in eternal peace.

If Cde Peter woke from his grave and saw my current state of bitterness, he would be flabbergasted. Cde Jerome Maake, (one of his fellow prisoners in E-Section) became Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Defence, and wrote a letter of motivation to the then Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, for my military rank to be upgraded, referring to me as a senior member of the movement who should not have to beg for what he deserved.

During my time in the Angolan bush, except for a few months in 1981, while attending a Military Training Artillery Course in the Soviet Union, I spent much time with comrades doing collective reading of Marxism-Leninism. My initiative was commended by comrades and administrators of the camp. The reading led to serious personal introspection about the socio-political circumstances into which I had been born. It was the start of my passionate affair with the Marxist-Leninist world outlook. This has never faded, as I have discovered the comprehensiveness of its analytical approach. My view is that it is more progressive, educative, objective and scientific than any other body of sociological or anthropological knowledge. It incorporates Political Economy, Historical Materialism and Dialectical Materialism.

For obvious reasons, it has been consistently negatively portrayed, vilified, and rendered unpopular within the capitalist system of higher education. For me, Marxism-Leninism had always constituted a reliable

compass for political and ideological diagnosis and navigation. It has never failed me to this day. For those who genuinely want to have an in-depth understanding of how a capitalist mode of production works and the negative impact it has on the social consciousness of the people who are living under it, I would advise that they engage with the Marxist-Leninist classics.

In the MK Camps in Angola, we commemorated anniversaries such as the Sharpeville Massacre (21 March); Workers' Day (1 May); the 1976 uprising (16 June); adoption of the Freedom Charter (26 June), Women's Day (9 August); and the formation of uMkhonto weSizwe (16 December). At Funda Camp shortly before the Sharpeville commemoration, I was asked by the Camp Commissar (Cde Mhlawuzi, combat name) to be one of three comrades to deliver a speech for the occasion. Another was Cde 'Sunduza', a comrade who was bald-headed and was far older than me, a *grootman*, in township lingo. He was more intellectually and politically enlightened than I was at age 18. He was probably a former student activist, of whom there were many, including comrades Peter Mokaba, Collins 'Animal' Chabane and Jerome Maake. Nevertheless, I got busy with my research resources – stashes of books in the camp library. I was extremely nervous about the task because, apart from the fact that I am basically an introvert, I had never delivered a speech in front of an audience. Much to the satisfaction of the Commissar and other members of the collective reading of Marxism-Leninism, I succeeded. Apparently the reading project was bearing fruit.

In our MK Camps in Angola, the educational levels of comrades varied. That is why we used to have interpreters whenever there was a formal address from the leadership, or the daily reading of news. In Novakatenga in the south of Angola, where I did my formal training, the current Secretary of Defence, Dr Gulube (combat name 'Scientist Manifesto') did the translations into isiZulu after Cde Gibson Njenje (former Director-General of the National Intelligence Agency) had read in English.

Funda Camp was in the northern part of Angola and was constituted by the movement to be a front area that was strictly restricted to potential military operatives. It was made up of trained personnel and those who used to arrive and do crash courses of not more than three months, then go back and carry out military operations inside the country. At the time, with only a platoon as its strength, there was no formal syllabus for military training. As trained personnel, our role revolved around

refreshing and target shooting practice. At a later stage, a survival course was designed particularly for the Special Operations Machinery whose mandate was to deal with strategic high value targets inside the country. In Funda, we had the privilege of first-hand information about how certain military operations were executed. Comrades would come back to the camp after the execution of their operation provided that they did not get killed or captured while inside the country, as it often happened.

During my stay in Funda, our Platoon Commander was the late Cde Norman (combat name) who was also our physical instructor. The late Cde Jabu (combat name) was our Platoon Commissar, having attended a party school in Bulgaria, as had most of our commissars and political instructors who had attended party schools abroad. It appears to have been effective judging from their political performance and competency when they returned to the camp. Cde Norman was with the late Cde Gordon Dieketso (combat name), also known as the 'Lion of Chiawelo' after the skirmish in Chiawelo, Soweto. They both fought gallantly before they were killed by the SADF in 1981. Cde Gordon was also part of our group who had trained in 1978, in Novakatenga Camp as part of the Moncada Detachment, before it was bombarded in February 1979 by the SA Air Force.

The Military Guerrilla Training Course that I undertook in Novakatenga Camp in 1978, was a very extensive and intensive course. It was made up of ten subjects: Firearms, Military Combat Work (MCW), Topography, Communication, Artillery, Political Education, Engineering, Tactics, Physical Education and Marching Drill. The Camp Commander was the late Cde Julius Mokoena (combat name), who was a veteran of the 1967 Wankie Operation in Zimbabwe, with the likes of the late Cde Chris Hani. The Camp Commissar was Cde Artha (combat name), and Chief of Staff was Cde Thamezulu (combat name). Our group was commissioned by Cde O.R. Tambo, who named it 'Moncada Detachment', after the six month's military training that ended around October 1978. In my Service Certificate, the month of my birth was 'adjusted' to conceal the fact that I was a child soldier at 15 years 5 months when I started the training in March 1978.

The name Moncada has historical significance in relation to the Cuban Revolution. Moncada was the largest barracks of the despot Batista. Apparently, it was his last bastion, and was the last strategic facility to be stormed and destroyed by the Cuban guerrillas, led by

Cde Fidel Castro and Cde Che Guevara, which ultimately led to the overthrow of the Batista regime. Our detachment had a strong political and ideological bond with Cuba and a Cuban contingent among our training instructors.

At the end of the course, during the graduation ceremony, we were required to take an Oath of Allegiance. This entailed marching towards Comrade O.R. as he held a Golden Spear. Holding tightly with him, we repeated after him the words, ‘With this Spear of the Nation, an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth...’ During that moment tension was thick in the air. Prior to the ceremony there was a formal address, to the effect that whoever was not ready to take an oath, was allowed to say so. No one came forward. Just imagine the emotion of looking Cde O.R. in the eye as he held the Spear, and with him, committing oneself to the revolution. For me aged 16 years, it was quite a frightening situation. In hindsight, I must have looked older than my actual age, perhaps motivating the Movement against convincing me to take the route of going to school. When we were in Mozambique, where we were given combat names; we were interviewed and asked which route we wanted to take: school or military training.

Those with me in the training included many who later became members of the post-1995 integrated South African National Defence Force (SANDF). These were:

Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) Lieutenant General Shilubane (Ret.);  
Major General Msizi (my Company Commander during the training);  
Lieutenant General Norman Yengeni, Chief of Human Resources of the SANDF, (together with Cde Collins Chabane we played in a musical band);

Major General Sandile Sizane (my current Chief Director in the Defence Intelligence);

The late Brigadier General L. Magxwalisa (Ret.) (he was a Regional Commander and I was his Deputy, a Regional Commissar in the Eastern Cape Region appointed by Cde Chris Hani in mid-1991 when he was accompanied by the former Chief of the SANDF Gen Timothy Ngwenya ‘Bra T’);

Brigadier General S. Bobele;

Brigadier General L. Dyandyi (also working in Defence Intelligence);

Colonel M. Mbobela (we were together in Zimbabwe in 1994 for a Military Intelligence Course in preparation for SANDF integration and later, in the Defence Intelligence Division);



Colonel M. Matyobeni (we were together in the Special Ops Machinery);  
Colonel S. Ngeleleza (Ret.);

The late Secretary of Defence Cde Joe Masilela (combat name Che Guevara) was a Company Commissar of Company 1 during the training in Novakatenga Camp; and

Current Secretary of Defence Dr Gulube (combat name Scientist Manifesto) who in Novakatenga was responsible, together with the Former Director General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) Cde Gibson Njenje, for capturing news bulletins from different international radio stations and reading them for us in the assembly every morning ...

There might be others whom I have forgotten.

Many of them have either recently retired or are about to retire, just over 40 years since we trained together. In the Defence Intelligence Division where I am currently working, four of us belonged to the Moncada Detachment: Major General Sandile Sizani (in the process of retiring); Brigadier General Lydia Dyandyi; Colonel Dladla (Chaplain) and myself. Another, Brigadier General Thandi Nodola, has retired. I first met her in 1981 at camp Viana in Angola where I was doing 122 mm Grad-PE practical shooting exercises. A beautiful and sweet comrade whose combat name was Daphney, working as a Medical Officer catering for members of the camp. Ironically, when I met her again in the Defence Intelligence Division, I did not recognise her until someone told me that this was a lady I had first met in 1981 in Viana. What struck me about her in the camp, was her kind-heartedness and approachability whenever I went to her for a medical consultation. I trust that she retained those beautiful traits.

In Namibia, SWAPO comrades who belonged to the military wing of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), who were combatants in the bush and their real veterans, had their welfare situation prioritised immediately after the political takeover. A previous Minister of Water and Sanitation, Cde Lindiwe Sisulu, when she was Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, did try to deal with our situation; saying the issue of the service of the Non-Statutory Forces (NSF) members must be taken into consideration when it comes to remuneration (salaries). That project unfortunately never took off, as she was redeployed for reasons that are beyond one's knowledge. For many of us who returned from exile and have been under-ranked given our many years of service, the

project makes a lot of sense. For instance, I have currently got 42 years of service and am only Warrant Officer Class 1. Yet those with the same rank as mine, with only 10 years of service, get the same salary as me. It really does not make sense at all. Additionally, in compensation for my Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) I only received a lump sum of R12 000 with a monthly payment of R3 087.00 and a Special Pension of around R5 000. It is quite possible that the persons who calculated that amount of money, endorsing it in Parliament, do not know the hardships and pain of having been in the bushes and mountains of Angola, whilst being bitten by tsetse flies and mosquitos. In 1978 I was hospitalised for four weeks with malaria. I was so sick and emaciated from a loss of appetite that I thought I was going to die.

The late Cde (Doctor) Thandi Ndlovu (combat name Mavis), who made a name in the construction industry and was known to be a people's doctor in the informal settlement of Orange Farm, was also in Novakatenga belonging to Company 2 of the June 16 Detachment. She was a soprano in the choir to which I belonged, and which recorded in our Radio Freedom studio in Luanda in 1978. The choir was conducted by Cde O.R., who as musically talented in addition to his legal and leadership skills.

Novakatenga was made up of a Moncada Detachment, constituted by Company 1 and 3. Company 2, from the 1976 June 16 Detachment already had trained personnel, and some members from the 1960s Luthuli Detachment, including our Camp Commander Cde Julius Moekoena. In the camp, Cubans had an autonomous existence with their own separate building, amenities, and administration, to prevent enemy infiltration. When the camp was poisoned in 1977, the Cubans converted their dining hall into a hospital to assist comrades who were vomiting and suffering from acute diarrhoea. Cde Phumla Williams (combat name Florence), who is currently an Acting Director-General in the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) was also in the Moncada Detachment. When Company 3 was formed in Kibachi (a transit camp en route to Novakatenga) for the Commanders course, she was appointed Section Commissar, and I was her Section Commander. I wonder if she still remembers that? Some comrades seem to be suffering from what I call 'an acute political and ideological amnesia due to ideological capture by neo-liberal bourgeois ideology.' Cde Florence was slightly older than me, projecting a mature and politically enlightened image. She deserves to be where she is now, and even to be a minister for that matter. I was only 15 years old when I first

joined and cannot recall what image I projected. I suspect it might have been that of a politically naïve teenage boy who was ignorant and in desperate search of knowledge. Our son Sizwe is almost 15 years old as I write, and whenever he goes out to ride his bike, I always caution him to be careful and to be at home earlier rather than later. I find him very fragile and vulnerable. Just imagine at his age, I was already in Angola, preparing for a war of liberation. In hindsight, I really do not know how I managed, it is unbelievable indeed.

Cde Ronnie Kasrils (called ANC Khumalo at the time) used to be a regular visitor at Novakatenga. He played soccer with us during the weekends. Comrade Jack Simon was also a regular visiting lecturer in politics. I used to wonder why those whites in our midst seemed to be vastly different from the whites back home. They related to Black Africans as human beings and equals. When Cde Ronnie Kasrils played soccer with us, I was shocked and amazed. I was flabbergasted when a white Cuban drank from a pipe where I had just drunk, so contrary to what I had experienced at home. It stimulated a rethink about hating all white people. The Black Consciousness philosophy so well-articulated by Steve Biko played a significant role in conscientising us. The PAC declaration that ‘Whites must be driven to the sea’ was appealing. In 1973 the United Nations had declared apartheid as ‘a crime against humanity’.<sup>19</sup> However, most of us did not understand why the preamble to the Freedom Charter declared that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white. That declaration was one of the reasons the PAC broke away from the ANC in 1958. Slogans like ‘One Nation One Azania’ and ‘Africa for Africans’ were popular during the 1970s.

In February 1979, Katenga, the largest ANC/MK training camp was razed to the ground by four SAAF jet fighters (Canberra and three Mirages). Luckily, no heavy casualties were suffered because the attack was predicted by our intelligence in collaboration with Cuban comrades. The attack was carried out at exactly 08:15. During that specific moment as a whole camp, we would have been on the assembly ground listening to News Bulletin read by Cde (Doctor) S.M. Gulube (currently a Secretary of Defence), and Cde Gibson Njenje (former Director-General (DG of the NIA). I forget the name of the third news reader, who sadly committed suicide in Pango Camp by shooting himself with a Makarov Pistol. Cde Gibson used to read in English and then Cde Dr Gulube would translate into isiZulu. I remember vividly that his finishing line used to be ‘*Ziyaguqa.*’ The bombing was so precise that not a single

structure was spared. Even the ground where we were supposed to be on parade was riddled with holes of bombs and heavy machine gun bullets. Just before the attack, the camp was evacuated. Our companies and platoons created a circular defence around the camp sufficiently far away. In the camp, we left a skeleton staff in the kitchen and the hospital. There were L-shaped dugouts next to their structures in case of the bombardment. The attack followed several raids against ZIPRA camps in Zambia and SWAPO camps. The security forces were employing the Israeli strategy of 'Hot Pursuit', which meant that you must attack your enemy at its rear base.

On higher ground, that was not far away from my sector where we deployed outside the camp, there was a Zeke-U mounted, an anti-aircraft gun. Comrade Mainstay (his combat name) was on a routine duty on the hill next to our sector. Shortly before the four supersonics descended on us, I heard him shouting out loud: 'Avion, Avion, Avion.' The jet fighters skilfully negotiated a mountain near our camp while busy bombarding. While still stunned and amazed by what I was witnessing; the thunderous short and long burst fired by the Zeke-U in response, gave me goosebumps and my morale immediately improved. After a short while, I saw one of the four aircraft breaking from the formation, exuding fumes, looking distressed. It flew off from its organised and well-rehearsed formation, still exuding fumes without descending, but appearing to be in serious trouble. It was quite apparent that the pilots were working on accurate but outdated information. To all of us, it was clear that the jet had been hit. How I wished that it had just fallen there. We later learnt that it was found in the sea, by the FAPLA armed forces of Angola. Our anti-aircraft capability included a shoulder mounted missile launcher Sam-7 (Strela),<sup>20</sup> a Russian ground-to-air missile, which was in the possession of the Cubans. The missile follows the heat of the engine, and when the target accelerates, the missile also accelerates.

After the bombardment, we travelled for days by sea to northern Angola, to open a new camp called Pango that later became a training facility for the Isandlwana Detachment. We started that Camp with only a few structures of almost dilapidated buildings, to ensure that it was habitable. The building that accommodated Cubans was some distance from our own camp, unlike in Katenga. Our Camp Commander (if my memory serves me well) was Cde Thamezulu (combat name); Chief of Staff was Cde Mhlaba (combat name). He is currently Brigadier General Sindani in the SANDF. Ironically, a comrade of that rank once asked

me what I know about Pango. He had apparently received his training there, probably when I was on Robben Island in the mid-80s. I could understand why he felt confused because my current rank does not correlate at all with my struggle credentials. He later came back to me, perhaps after getting more information about my struggle background, and said, 'You are a real veteran and an unsung hero.'

In Pango, digging trenches, dug-outs, L-shapes and cutting were regular activities. As a fitness fanatic at the time, I regarded the process as exercise. I was once summoned for a reprimand by Cde Obadie, Chair of the Disciplinary Committee. I was accused of questioning orders and being argumentative. I recall asking comrades what constituted argumentativeness. Apart from that incident, which gave me a fright, my platoon commander once made me crawl for a long distance, until my body could not carry me any further, as a form of punishment. A 'grootman' comrade was once punished by being tied to a tree, which I found very humiliating. So, Pango gradually became an uncomfortable place to live. There was a lot of tension in the camp. Thankfully, my Section Commander Cde Ben TNT, a former professional boxer entertained us with jokes related to his former profession. That environment needed such characters at the time.

At times Cde Mzwai Philiso, Head of Security, would come and address us. Pointing his finger, he would tell us that *impimpis*, sell-outs, *imidlwembe* 'are here among you comrades.' I would feel tense and uncomfortable, as though this finger was pointing at me. At one stage I heard that some were planning to desert to Zaire, but the plan was thwarted. Occasionally, I visited the barracks where Cde 'Whitey' (currently SANDF Head of Human Resources) and Lt General Norman Yengeni, were staying, together with Comrade 'Uncle.' When Cde Mzwai arrived in the camp to address us, Cde Uncle was requested to stand up to point out comrades alleged to have been involved in sinister activities such as planning desertion. I was tense and frightened during the *khomba*: 'so and so stand up', 'so and so stand up.' One by one they were exposed. Apparently Cde Uncle was the informer tasked with collecting information.

Fortunately, the Movement knew who they were looking for. I remember while we were busy as always with our routine digging, a particular comrade who would be busy telling us about how comfortably Cde O.R. Tambo was living in London, 'while we were sweating in the sun for *fokol*.' I remember wondering why he hated Cde O.R. so much.

It was quite apparent that he was engaging in subversion, trying to demoralise us. After I had left Pango, I learnt that he and others had been arrested as enemy agents and taken to Quadro Prison. I was shocked at seeing whose names were listed as enemy agents, most occupying senior positions in the Movement, one a camp commander, and another was once a United Nations representative, another a recipient of an award for being the most disciplined soldier after a course. Apparently, the latter was the one who poisoned comrades in 1977. While on Robben Island in 1984, I heard that there had been a mutiny in Pango, involving comrades shooting at each other, something that was referred to as *uMkatashiko*.

When I was eventually told that I had to pack my stuff and leave Pango, I was over the moon, although I did not know where I would be taken. In MK at the time, it used to be said, '*Akubuzwa eMkhontweni*', meaning that when you were told to pack and leave, you should just oblige without asking questions. That movement used to be referred to as *Umchina*. For instance, it would be said, someone was taken by *Umchina*. This was an issue of such severity that one comrade, out of excitement once said, when told that he was leaving the camp, that it was as though he was being born again or holding Christ by his legs (*'Ubambu Thixo ngenyawo'*). I might have had a similar feeling when I was told that I was leaving Pango camp, which was beginning to be too uncomfortable for my liking. Perhaps the tension in Pango was caused by the ANC's realisation that we had been heavily infiltrated by apartheid regime spies.<sup>21</sup>

In the camps, the bell rang for various reasons, such as calling us for meals. We had a popular phrase, '*Iyawukhala ndingekho ngenye imini*', meaning that someday it will ring when I am no longer here. Another phrase that used to be articulated in a situation where one was completely exhausted and looked haggard, mostly during or after a physically tiring roadwork or a tactical manoeuvre, '*Wawuyaphi Emva Kwamarumusha?*', meaning, 'What were you doing following the hardened?' Another was used when a guerrilla was in high spirits in formation while road-working or during an exciting tactical manoeuvre, '*Khwela Mntano Peasant*', difficult to translate but basically, 'Run Son/Daughter of a Peasant.'

In 1979, I was taken to a camp called Funda in the Cartito area of Angola. On arrival, the car suddenly stopped in an open field and I thought we were not yet at our destination until I saw people emerging

from the bush. It was quite a depressing sight of thick, dense bush. There was not even a single structure like in Pango and Katenga. Only tents connected by footpaths amidst the bush. A distant river was the water source. I was told that Funda camp was a front area for comrades who were to be deployed inside the country for military operations and those who were doing crash courses to be immediately returned to the country for operations. It was emphasised that people did not normally stay long in Funda. I had no idea it would be my home until 1982, an adverse situation which I had to accept.

Fortunately, there were no female comrades in the camp. It was not female-friendly, partially because the area had lots of animals, snakes, and pythons. When we shot a python, it was quite a feast and the meat was good and delicious indeed. We called it Kentucky because of the way comrades used to cook and fry it in flour. The concept of guerrillas being *iNyamazane* was applicable in that specific situation.

The Camp Commander was Cde Masango (combat name) (currently a senior SANDF officer) and the Camp Commissar was Cde Mhlawuzi (combat name) (once a senior official in the NIA). Whilst there in 1980, I met comrades Peter Mokaba, Collins and Jerome Maake. I was appointed as a Chief of Logistics, and Cde Mlungwana (combat name Raphatlo) was appointed as my deputy. He was a close friend, one of four that included Cde Khaya, my namesake, and Cde Litha. With Cde Mlungwana, we decided on the daily menu. Coincidentally, during that period there was a huge ship that was docked in Luanda from France, with a massive supply of food that took days to offload. It was popularly called 'Amanda.' For a change, we had nice food from the West. Amongst my favourites were a chocolate coffee and tinned meat that looked and tasted like Bull Brand. A comrade and I gained a lot of weight, that we later regretted and fought extremely hard to reduce with road-working under the scorching sun. Like me, Cde Mlungwana was genetically large in physique and liked food. Neither one would say no to the other.

During the lengthy stay in Funda, I developed the hobby of hunting, especially buffalos, just to while away time. Three of us used to lay in ambush for buffalos. They were Cde Sunduza (combat name) and Cde Shakes (combat name). I wonder if they are still alive. We would leave the camp around 5am and go deeper into the bush, to lay-ambush on higher ground, alongside the river when the water was still. Apparently, buffalos prefer to drink where the water is still and they would arrive at the spot at around 2 or 3 am. A comrade told me they prefer still water

because they fear crocodiles. When I watch programmes like *Animal World* on the National Geographic channel of DStv I realise what we were up against, and I cringe and think that we were really adventurers. You cannot easily take a buffalo down with an AK bullet. An AK rifle is basically meant for penetration of the soft skin of a human being. We once shot at a bush pig that continued to run for a long distance. When we found it, the body was riddled with AK bullets. Rifles specifically designed for hunting are extremely high calibre weapons like German Mausers or cabbairns.

While in Funda camp I got incorporated into the Special Operations Machinery, newly formed and under the command of Comrade Joe Slovo. As a result I became part of the group of comrades who were to undergo a two-month military survival course. The unit was led by a gallant fighter, Cde Burney Moelekwane. As a unit, we had to leave the main camp to go and create our own make-shift camp in the jungle/bush, that was to be independent from the main camp. We would sleep in hammocks with uniform and boots always on around the clock. Belonging to Special Operations Machinery and undergoing a survival training course was exactly what I was yearning for at the time. Because of the long duration of my stay in Funda, I even went for another survival course. After those courses I was as fit as a fiddle and the weight I had gained while I was a Chief of Logistics disappeared. I mean just imagine a fat *inyamazane* (hardened guerrilla)! During the training in the survival course, we once climbed a very high mountain as part of closing the course and happened to be on the top of it on 1 January 1981.

While on top of the mountain, we celebrated the arrival of the New Year by firing all the weapons we had in our possession namely, bazookas, AKs with tracer bullets that lit the sky at night, company machine guns and 82mm mortars. Just after the celebratory shooting, we saw a MiG jet fighter of the armed forces of Angola (FAPLA) approaching and then circling the mountain. We were very scared that it was going to fire a missile at the mountain, which would have meant the end of all of us. Fortunately, it flew off after some time, perhaps realising that it was friendly forces that were busy with training. We might have disturbed their anti-aircraft defence radar system in Luanda, not far from Cartito.

The survival courses that I went through were particularly good for me personally, because there was a stage when I felt that I was not yet ready to engage on a battle level with the South African apartheid



security forces. I believe that before you deploy a guerrilla to engage with the enemy, you must be certain that he/she is prepared and fit psychologically, mentally, physically, and otherwise. After the survival courses, I was ready to engage. Special Ops Machinery standards were high. We were facing one of the most powerful conventional armies in Africa. During the commanders course training in 1978 in Novakatenga, the strength of the SADF in terms of equipment and personnel was made clear.

While still in Funda we used to hear about skirmishes inside the country where our comrades engaged the regime's security forces. In the Pretoria Silverton siege, three of our comrades occupied the Volkskas Bank and held the occupants hostage. We learnt later from those who were held hostage, that the comrades were not at all aggressive towards them. Instead, they were telling them about the justness of their cause, much to the amazement of the white hostages. Unfortunately, they got surrounded, and fought heroically inflicting casualties on the side of the enemy before they were all killed. At the time there were quite a few skirmishes and battles involving MK comrades inside the country. The regime downplayed them for propaganda reasons. As a result, there was a widespread information blackout. The masses were not to know that MK cadres were around the country, to liberate them.

The apartheid regime was particularly good when it came to that, to the extent that they even came up with a project specifically meant to focus on that aspect: the creation of Stratcom for Propaganda and Disinformation. Most South Africans were not aware that the SADF was once defeated in Angola at Cuito Cuanavale,<sup>22</sup> probably their biggest battle and biggest defeat. During the mid-1980s, white South Africans did not know that in the townships, South Africa was in flames. Massacres were being committed by the Security Police. It was also not known that in 1979, SAAF subjected the biggest training camp of the ANC/MK to heavy bombardment, attempting to kill hundreds, but failing dismally. Similarly, most people in South Africa were not aware of the big skirmish in 1978 in the Rustenburg area. Fierce fighting occurred between MK cadres and SADF forces, backed by Bophuthatswana soldiers. The MK cadres inflicted heavy casualties. When relating what happened, Cde Barney said during the battle SADF used the Bophuthatswana soldiers as a shield, shooting between them at the important targets. He said that the 'Bop' soldiers were visibly frightened by the way the SADF were shooting during the skirmish.

Cde Barney Moelekoane was the Commander of the unit, after having gone through a survival training course in the mountains (*Emagajini*) in Zambia under the auspices of the ZIPRA forces. It was a good survival course for a guerrilla; we ended up adopting it in Angola during the Cuito battle. During that battle when it became darker, they managed to withdraw to Botswana. Naturally, it is more difficult to pin down a guerrilla when it is dark. A white South African once told me that he only became aware of what was happening in South Africa during the 1980s whilst he was overseas. The National Party did not provide its constituency with facts about what was happening on the ground. Perhaps that is why ordinary white South Africans do not expect us to be angry. They were oblivious of the intensity and depth of the black man's pain. We are the ones who went the extra mile in ensuring that there is reconciliation in this country, which is very unfair to the Black African majority, oppressed and dehumanised for centuries.

Comrade O.R. once arrived to address us, accompanied by Cde Moses Mabhida, who was the General Secretary of the Communist Party at the time, and Comrade Amos Masondo, our MK National Commissar. That visit struck me because, under normal circumstances each leader would come on his own to address us in the camp. On that day, they all came and addressed us individually, using their vernaculars in motivating us to engage in a war. Indeed, as we were initially briefed, we were in on the frontline, highly trained, and needed a lot of motivation in that regard. They were brutally frank with us about our lives as MK operatives. We were to infiltrate the country prepared to face the realities of death or imprisonment. A different type of language to that spoken during our training. Cde Mabhida and Cde Amos Masondo were absolutely specific about how combative and aggressive we were to be as MK operatives. Cde Moses Mabhida said, *'Masiphuzeni igazi lamabhulu Maqabane.'* Cde Commissar conscientised us about the horrors of the apartheid system and why the enemy should be detested and eliminated. On the other hand, true to his statesmanship, our President Cde O.R., would remind us that we were not militarists but armed political activists with a 60% focus on the Freedom Charter and 40% as AK guerillas. This ratio was used to discourage overemphasis on the military aspect of our revolution, at the expense of the political mass involvement and mobilisation.

I sensed that Cde O.R. was always concerned that the armed struggle be conducted in a dignified manner; and that civilian casualties were

to be avoided. From my own personal experience, when you are on the ground with an AK gun, it is easy to behave in an aggressive and Rambo-like manner. Hence, in the MK camps, before you even held a gun you were taught about the importance of the man behind the gun. That I referred to Cde O.R. as a 'Towering Revolutionary Intellectual par excellence' is not a mistake. Whenever he addressed us in the camps, he made a powerful impression at both a political and intellectual level. He once lectured us about how important it was for a cadre to be politically educated and to be an independent thinker, so as not to be a fanatic or blind follower of a particular leader. He cited an example of an ANC factionalist leadership group of eight, during the 1950s, that divided the movement. We were urged to discern that when a leader goes astray and wants to divide and factionalise the organisation, we should refuse to follow that leader. Indeed, that is only possible if a cadre is highly politically groomed. Cde O.R. used to be at pains to emphasise the issue of political and intellectual independent thinking. The first time I heard about the concept of Revolutionary Optimism was from Cde O.R.

Personally, I used to appreciate the addresses from the leadership, particularly on the question of preparing us for military engagement at any point. For indeed, it was imperative that one had to have a strong conviction and to detest the enemy before one could effectively engage and kill without feeling remorseful. Extremist Muslim fundamentalists on suicide missions had extraordinarily strong convictions which motivated them to carry out suicide missions. They would say that Allah was on their side and was in full support of the elimination of the so-called Infidels. Before embarking on something as serious as engaging in a war, you must have an extraordinarily strong justification and be convinced that what you are doing is worth doing and dying for. I used to appreciate those lectures, so that I knew what I was undertaking as a member of Special Operations Machinery. Aged only 18/19 years I knew I was in a war situation and had to adapt. There was no turning back.

Based on that, I undertook informal personal research for self-empowerment. I read the work of Che Guevara and books about other revolutionary struggles. By consistent training, I managed to become a marksman, knowing how to zero an AK, so that it could shoot accurately. I had to convince myself not to think about the possibility of ever seeing my family again or envisaging life after the struggle. For it was quite definite for me that I was going to end up in one of the above-mentioned realities as explained by the leadership. I had hoped for death rather

than imprisonment. That I am still alive, I take as a second chance, but I never knew that this second chance would be as stressful, depressing, and miserable at the making of my own cruel and heartless comrades.

After the survival course, we performed a military exercise (a platoon attack using a 62 mm mortar, RPG 7 (Bazooka) PKM company machine gun and AK rifles) for the leadership delegation. It was led by the late Cde John Nkadimeng, who was a Chairperson of the Revolutionary Council at the time. Revolutionary Council was *inter alia* mandated to play an oversight role over MK military operations. That is why they were there to see for themselves how ready the boys were, and to report to the overall Commander-in-Chief Cde O.R. Tambo. Much to the satisfaction of the leadership, the exercise and manoeuvre were excellent.

My favourite weapon that I liked to carry in the bush, was an RPK machine gun, which is basically like an AK but which was mounted on a bipod. I particularly liked it for hunting. When I saw a springbok, I could easily mount it on the ground and lie down and take a good aim. The other weapon I liked was a Czechoslovakian AK, which was different from the regular Russian AK, because its front guard had a grip. As Special Ops Machinery, we deviated from the Warsaw Pact Doctrine of using a chest target for shooting practise, instead we reduced it to a head target. This meant that we wanted every cadre of Special Ops to be a good shot and a marksman.

Our Guerrilla Doctrine was inclined towards that of the Vietnamese, the most powerful guerrilla army in the world under the leadership of Cde Ho Chi Minh. It was designed to dislodge and defeat the most powerful army in the world (USA), in the war that took more than 30 years, like the ZIPRA forces of Zimbabwe, led by Cde Joshua Nkomo. During the bloody Vietnamese guerrilla war with the USA, big B-52 jet bombers were constantly bombarding villages, causing untold miseries to the Vietnamese. Ho Chi Minh once said:

They may bring in half a million, a million or even more troops to step up their war of aggression in South Vietnam. They may use thousands of aircraft for intensified attacks against North Vietnam. But never will they be able to break the iron will of the heroic Vietnamese people, their determination to fight against American aggression for national salvation. The more truculent they grow, the more serious their crimes. Their war may last five, ten,

twenty or more years; Hanoi, Haiphong and other cities and enterprises may be destroyed; but the Vietnamese people will not be intimidated; nothing is more precious than independence and freedom. Once victory is won, our people will rebuild their country and make it more prosperous and beautiful.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed a demonstration of the invincibility of the human spirit, and a display of revolutionary optimism as advocated by Cde O.R. The alliance between MK and the Zimbabwean People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) dates back the 1967 skirmish at Wankie between MK cadres and both the Rhodesian and SA Security Forces. MK survival training in Angola and the *toyi-toyi* (still used for protest) were deliberate. The alliance was not decided in boardrooms but was sealed by blood.

During 1978, when we were busy with our six month Commanders Course Training, the Movement sent comrades from the June 16 Detachment to Vietnam for training on home-made explosives and booby traps (urban guerrilla warfare). When they returned, they demonstrated what they learnt. It was impressive and spectacular. The problem with the ZIPRA comrades was their overemphasis on military, at the expense of political work, and a lack of unity because of ethnicity. ZIPRA was made up of mostly Ndebele speakers and ZANLA of Shona speakers, operating from Zambia and Mozambique respectively. The breakaway of certain elements from ZAPU to form ZANU was caused by tribalism. In his book, 'A Story of my Life'<sup>24</sup> a former leader of ZIPRA Cde Joshua Nkomo, elaborates extensively about how and when the issue of tribalism emerged within their ranks, early in the 1960s. The formation of the so-called Patriotic Front before the Lancaster House Negotiations was unity in theory rather than in practice. The outcome of those negotiations favoured ZANLA, led by Robert Mugabe. Consequently, ZIPRA and its political wing ZAPU ended up being extinguished and sunk into political oblivion. That is why, under the current circumstances, you cannot talk about ZAPU because it no longer exists. Some of our comrades, such as Cde Burney Moelekoane, were trained by ZIPRA in the mountains of Zambia (Emagajini). The very phrase '*Itoyi-toyi*' was not our invention but that of ZIPRA Comrades. We adopted it in 1978 when we were undergoing a Military Commanders Course in Novakatenga.

In 1981, members of the Special Ops who were part of the Survival Course unit, bombed the Sasol refinery plant in Secunda with limpet mines. The operation was reported by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA) and German Broadcasting Station (Doshavare). BBC sensationalised the event, reporting that South Africa was in flames. Cde O.R. officially confirmed that the Glorious People's Army uMkhonto weSizwe was responsible for the attack. Apparently, this hit the South African apartheid regime where it hurts most, and without wasting any time, they responded by hitting us extremely hard in Matola, killing 13 of our comrades. For us in the Special Ops, the attack was very personal, and we were very hurt and angry. In that raid they captured a comrade whose combat name was Msuthu, he became an Askari and identified three comrades (the Cde Moegoerane group in Johannesburg), and shot one of them in the groin. The three were sentenced to death in the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court.

While we were still reeling from the shock and pain of the Matola Raid, I was chosen to be one of ten comrades to be sent to Pereval Camp in Simferopol for an Artillery Training Course for 122mm Gun Grad-Pe. The Commanding Officer was Tavarish Kalashinik, a veteran of the Second World War. My group arrived shortly after the Soviet Union had hosted the Olympic Games. Grad-Pe is an artillery piece with a maximum range of 11km, a radius of destruction of 600m. Its shell is called Jet-Shell and is a very heavy piece of machinery carried by six men. The camp hosted national liberation movements for military training from different countries that were ideologically left-wing orientated and anti-imperialist. I shared ideas on calculations with the Arab comrades from the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) who were using a weapon that is similar to our Grad-Pe, a forty-barrel Stalin's Organ (Katyusha). This was the weapon said to have played a pivotal role in the defeat of the SADF in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale. I met comrades from ZIPRA, SWAPO, Nicaraguan Sandinistas, Vietnamese, Ethiopians, Malians and Palestinians. The latter were extremely popular for having a lot of money (Petro dollars) in contrast to our small allowance in the local currency (roubles). Fortunately, I had a Palestinian friend who used to rescue me when I ran out of cigarettes. They had access to Marlboro which was only available in diplomatic shops. From different parts of the world, we were very conscious that our struggles were characterised by the common anti-imperialist ideological stance, all of us subscribing to Marxist-Leninist ideology.

On completion of the course, we returned to Angola and were stationed in Viana MK camp. While there, we used to go for daily practical shooting exercises at the FAPLA (armed forces of Angola) shooting range, under the instructorship of a Russian specialist in artillery, Colonel Eugene. It was quite clear that the leadership intended to up the ante, after the blow of the Matola raid. As the Special Operations Machinery, we were equal to the task and were ready to oblige, even at the supreme cost of death.

When we returned to Cartito after artillery practice in Viana, there was now a new Funda camp that was not far from the old one. It was far better than the old one, with a sense of civility and even some lady comrades around, and some solid buildings. When I left the country in 1978, I was still almost a virgin with only one intimate encounter on my horizontal CV. In hindsight, it was a dismal failure because of lack of experience. Like all teenage boys, I used to adore girls but knew very well that, under those conditions I could not have managed to secure myself a girlfriend because the market was extremely limited. Furthermore, I had no status in the camp; I was a mere rifle man. But there was a girl by the name of Cde Jacqueline, who arrived for a crash course. She was very well-chiselled and curvaceous and exuded sensuality with a typical African figure, very sexy according to African standards. Personally, I am not attracted to the Eurocentric type of figure that is exhibited on fashion catwalks. My preference is the Afrocentric shape that is full and voluptuous. Jacqueline was vivacious and free spirited and was said to be from the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). She was also politically enlightened, intelligent, and eloquent even during formal discussions. We were close friends, and I used to enjoy listening to her because she was more advanced than me. In hindsight, she might have been older than me. I developed a crush on her but was scared to tell her because I had a feeling that she was going to reject me. But since she was so positive and well-disposed towards me, I thought that if I were bold enough to tell her that I liked her very much, I could have hit a gold mine. I was anxious that even if I succeeded, my age and lack of experience would count against me. Another disadvantage that I did not recognise at the time was that I did not have the necessary intellectual capacity, armoury, and repertoire to meet her standards. Our relationship remained platonic. Whenever she was on duty on a post in the camp during the day, I would visit her or a chat. In fact, what was most attractive to me was her intelligence and political enlightenment.

As a choirmaster, I recruited four lovely girls, students at the Matsapa University in Swaziland. They were in the camp to undergo a crash course in military training. During choir rehearsals, their presence made quite a difference in terms of liveliness. They were typical of girls who had attended Model-C schools. They loved to speak a lot of English with a ‘suburban’ accent. I think the comrade who committed suicide in the old Funda camp, would not have done so in the new camp, because of their presence. In line with our Movement’s traditions, our choir performs to celebrate our historic occasions. I also performed a musical duet with Cde Barney Moelekoane, with him on the guitar that he used to like carrying around.

In the new Funda I also met, among others, former Deputy Minister of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO), Cde Ebrahim Ebrahim; current SA Ambassador in Cuba, Cde Thenjiwe Mthintso; Cde Marion Sparks and a Cde Sue. We attended classes pertaining to calculations needed to use the 122mm Grad-Pe (requiring maths and physics). Comrades Buddybucks and Mainstay (combat names), a sentry during the bombardment of Novakatenga, were extremely helpful and knowledgeable. Artillery is a complex subject. Indeed, the very existence of sophisticated inter-continental ballistic missiles are products of extensive scientific research.

While we were still busy with our slates, calculating and familiarising ourselves with Grad-Pe, out of nowhere, the *Umchina* moment arrived for some comrades. Still trying to figure out how to continue with our classes with less manpower; wonderful news came that Voortrekkerhoogte had been bombarded by the gallant fighters of the glorious People’s Army uMkhonto weSizwe. Our morale was elevated, for we were among the few who knew what was going on. We also knew that the weapon that had been used had been mounted in Laudium, about one kilometre to the west, in a direct firing position. Having never been in Pretoria, I thought Voortrekkerhoogte was just a military base. I was familiar with the struggle song ‘*Siyaya ePitoli*.’ Later I learnt that it was also the monument, which is a national heritage site for Afrikaners.

As per tradition in all the MK camps in the bush, we had sporting activities and cultural evenings for arts performances. During our time at Funda, there was a pistol (Makarov) shooting competition, to celebrate the anniversary of the Freedom Charter. I was runner-up to a white former-member of the SADF, and in third place, Brigadier General Cde Lungile Magxwalisa. My goal of being a good shot, able to hit a bullseye,



was ultimately fulfilled. Knowing that I soon would be going to the Front, I kept on practising shooting, even with my left hand. Our fondness of the AK resulted in several endearing names for it, like *Khuzwayo*, *Makotokoto* and *Umtshakazi*. At the Old Funda we once had an argument about whether the AK could fire while submerged in water. Comrade 'Whitey' (currently a Lieutenant General and SANDF Chief of Human Resources), volunteered to go into the deep water of a river and release a shot whilst underwater. The barrel of the trusted AK broke. He was punished by being made to dig a hole. We used to wash and swim frequently in that river. One morning, on our way to wash, we discovered a large crocodile sunbathing. I got the shock of my life because I love swimming. We shot and ate it. Like a python, a crocodile consists of white meat, but the liver was said to be poisonous. I never swam there again.

While in the bush, I critically read Marxist-Leninist philosophy. This included the writings of Sheptulin; Lenin through the eyes of Lunatchasky; *Scientific Communism* by Afanasyev; *Dialectics of Nature* by Frederick Engels; and the *Birth of a Genius*. I admired the provision of a library in every camp, regardless of its remoteness. There was always a library of some sort, with stashes of all kinds of books, particularly progressive publishers. On Robben Island, each section had its own library, and plenty of time at our disposal to read. It is in books that you are likely to get answers, even about the very social condition in which you find yourself. I took it upon myself to endeavour to learn and to absorb as much knowledge as possible. When I was in the old Funda camp in Angola, a sad occurrence happened. A comrade and friend, who was almost my same age of 17 years, committed suicide by shooting himself with an AK. He did not die instantly, because he had placed the barrel of the AK below his chin, hoping that the bullet would go straight through his head. The bullet ricocheted and blew half of his face off, leaving him to die a painful death, gasping and groaning. Just imagine the horrible sight of a such a smashed human face.

I am quite certain that if he had been as keen as I was to read books, that incident would not have happened, especially since he was just a teenager, a phase that is normally characterised by naïvety and identity crisis. When I was in the bush in Angola, I had to acknowledge the fact that I was young, naïve and ignorant. I had insufficient intellectual repertoire and political know-how to understand the realities and dynamics of the National Liberation Struggle. Profoundly serious introspection led me to the decision to enmesh myself in reading and

to asking many questions of those I regarded as more mature and knowledgeable than myself.

It is time to redefine what is meant by being educated, learned or intellectual. Intellectualism emerges from both formal and informal education. Education entails an accumulation of knowledge and value both in and outside of formal institutions. It is specifically for this reason that when we, as the ANC, employ our comrades in senior and strategic positions in government, we do not consider formal bourgeois academic qualifications more highly than education acquired during the revolutionary struggle. The ANC Deployment Committee is meant to ensure that the gains of the Revolution are jealously guarded against counter-revolutionary attempts to stall the process. Cde Alex Allende of Chile was brutally killed during the coup d'état, after they took over as a Revolutionary Party because of that mistake. Unfortunately in our situation, there has been large-scale looting of State coffers by the very comrades who have been deployed. The sickening proportions of this phenomenon are an indication of the legacy of apartheid colonialism lurking in our psyche.

Our revolutionary struggle comprised five fighting factors, in addition to the four pillars. We were victorious because we never deviated from them:

1. Tried and tested leadership produced by revolutionary practice and not just by sweet-sounding textbook intellectuals expecting the trust of oppressed masses.
2. Reliable revolutionary scientific doctrine to guide revolutionary action as an ideological weapon in the form of a Marxist-Leninist Doctrine.
3. Mass mobilisation across all social strata of the society, as exemplified by the United Democratic Front (UDF) and Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) Tripartite Alliance. Cde Joe Gqabi adopted this task.
4. Massive campaigning for international solidarity to isolate the enemy. Anti-Apartheid Movements were created in most Western countries to isolate the SA regime by means of economic sanctions, and the United Nations declaring apartheid as a crime against humanity. The Movement deployed comrades internationally to ensure that this was realised.
5. A rear base for guerrilla warfare training and the launching pad for military operations, as in the frontline states.

If a comrade committed suicide during the National Liberation Struggle in the bush, there was not a decent burial. They were just thrown into a hole and buried, and then life went on as if nothing happened. There was no ceremony and singing of '*Hamba kahle Mkhonto*'. The message from the authorities was that to commit suicide during the Revolutionary Struggle was tantamount to cowardice. I became very stressed after being hauled to the admin office for reprimanding and found a book entitled *Adjusting to Frustration*. It helped me to deal with shock and stress. I used to love books that dealt with psychology, for I have always been interested in human behaviour, reading the works of Sigmund Freud or Georgy Plekhanov whenever I could lay my hands on their material.

The behaviour of an individual is, by and large, determined by the social material conditions of his existence. A social deviant from a well-off family is less likely to become a beggar or steal bread, than to pursue drugs because of affordability and access to money. But I still feel that a lot of influence is exerted on human behaviour by forces of the subconscious that are beyond the level of a person's conscious awareness, probably assimilated during childhood. Professional psychologists are trained to unpack those dynamics. An understanding of psychology increases one's capacity to succeed in adapting to stressful situations. A well-read person always has a broader frame of reference. They can see beyond the banalities of the obvious by deliberate application of abstract critical thinking and analysis. Professionals in the social sciences and humanities do not have laboratories as do natural scientists. Their laboratory is the power of the imagination and the mind, also referred to as a Force of Abstraction. Our daily realities manifest in deceptive ways, at times leading us to take decisions or arrive at flawed conclusions that are based on our skewed judgment. For example, we are daily deceived by so-called sunrise and sunset. The perception that the sun rises in the morning and that it sets at dusk masks the reality that the sun remains static. Astronomy and geography emerged to explain the revolution of the earth around the sun rather than vice versa. Likewise, one's casual observation of the moon provides a very limited perception of its reality. There are always two sides to a story and maybe more.

From time to time, we feel (rightly so) that people fail to understand us, because of the wide gap between the real us and what they think they know about us, based on how we appear to them. In our society, you are not judged in terms of who you are, but what you are and how you

appear at a specific moment. In my work environment, certain officers even salute me when I am in civvies, because to them, I seem like a senior officer. One of them once said that he thought I was a general.

# Challenges of revolutionary transformation

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The challenges faced by the ANC are transient and need to be viewed as a necessary cleansing process that will enable the country to have unblemished public officials. The Commissions of Inquiry are necessary in our social transition. In other countries social transitions were characterised among other things by the existence of 'Nuremberg Trials', where culprits had to answer for atrocities. History taught us that, during any revolutionary transformation, the contradiction between the past (the old and decaying) and the present (the new and rising) becomes, at times, so acute that miscarriage of the revolution becomes a possibility. This occurred with Nicaragua's Sandanistas, the left-wing National Liberation Movement led by Daniel Ortega, who later managed to regain the moral high ground and political power by democratic means. Their bloody National Liberation War against the stubborn and obstinate junta/military regime was largely supported by the USA, the main funder of anti-democratic and counter-revolutionary movements. I once met Sandanistas in the Pereval Camp in the USSR when there for artillery training, after the Sandinistas had liberated their country. During the Cold War era that camp in the USSR hosted National Liberation Movements that were left wing and anti-imperialist, as opposed to those supported by America, such as Angola's UNITA, Mozambique's RENAMO and many other counter-revolutionary movements. I had thought that our route to liberation would be similar to that of the Sandanistas. The last phase of their the Guerrilla War was characterised by a military 'Offensive to Managua', the capital city of Nicaragua. I thought that ours was going to be an 'Offensive to Pretoria.' We used to sing '*Siyaya ePitoli*' which meant exactly that. The above-mentioned situation was a miscarriage of the revolution during the

transitional period in Nicaragua and must be a lesson to us. There is no reason to relax and be complacent when you have conquered political power, which is, in essence, merely cosmetic, enabling the previously disenfranchised oppressed majority to vote, but without economic freedom. There is still a long way to go, terrible inequalities, high levels of unemployment, and grinding poverty escalating at an alarming and dangerous rate. The latter seems to be the underlying cause of current problems, including the xenophobic or Afrophobic violence.

People are just fed-up and frustrated, particularly when they realise that the reason for their plight is not because of a lack of resources, but the sickening corruption and abuse of those resources by some bureaucrats and their cronies. We are grateful to the Commissions of Inquiry and our strong civil society. I love the ANC but it must not be left unchecked. Indeed 'power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' As an MK manifesto puts it, 'the people's patience is not endless.' That phrase is followed by one of the most eloquent expressions of the mood of the people when they have been pushed too far and find themselves with their backs against the wall. It goes as follows: 'The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit, and we have no choice but to hit back, within our power, in defence of our people, our future and our freedom.' Cde Rolihlahla Mandela once said that if the ANC does not live up to its mandate of delivering services to the poorest of the poor masses of this country, the people must do to it what they did to the apartheid regime.

I equate our social transition with the biological condition of a woman who is in labour and about to give birth. In that specific regard our Motherland is seriously amidst labour pains. It is quite possible that we face a miscarriage of the Revolution, if we do not take the socioeconomic and political situation seriously. The forces with vested interests in the decaying and moribund socioeconomic and political situation will, with all the resources at their disposal, try desperately to disrupt and stall the transformational process. They do so by seeking reinforcement and manpower from the side of the democratic, progressive, left-wing revolutionary forces, by bribery and corruption to co-opting into lifestyles of obscene abundance and opulence, high electrified walls and conspicuous consumerism. The objective is to weaken and neutralise the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and to mitigate the threat to class and material

interests. As a countermeasure, there must be an all-out mobilisation of all democratic forces led by the ANC (a United Democratic Front model) to ensure that the gains of the revolution are protected, the NDR is sustained, and most importantly, a radical economic transformation is implemented to decisively deal with the country's challenges. Among the most progressive achievements of the current regime has been the emergence of a group of a 2 to 3 million Black African middle class. However, the beneficiaries have tended to become politically desensitised to the plight of the those still faced with grinding poverty. Chief Justice Moegoeng said, during his 2019 Mandela Memorial Lecture, that inequality is more acute currently than it was during the apartheid era. By so saying, he was implying that the democratic dispensation economically benefited a few Black Africans. Conditions for the majority deteriorate on a daily basis. The honeymoon for bourgeois democracy must, at some stage, give space for people's democracy to be established if we want to have lasting peace and tranquillity in this country.

When the embattled former President of the ANC and South Africa, Cde Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, became too vocal for the likes of White Monopoly Capital about the Radical Economic Transformation, CEOs of large companies rose in their numbers and went to the streets calling 'Zuma must fall.' Of course, it makes a lot of sense that White Monopoly Capital and its allies cannot, among other things, want to be an isolated and easily identifiable target. It will always try to find ways and means of ensuring that its economic power is sustained by, among other things, diluting itself and creating a strong and well-fortified buffer zone. A few rich Black African male and female CEOs are leading massive corporates as a smokescreen to appear as though they have embraced transformation. This has happened to some of our own comrades, whom we regarded as seasoned political activists and revolutionaries. They were committed and articulate when it came to the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution. In the words of the German poet, Bertolt Brecht, 'There are men who struggle for a day and they are good. There are men who struggle for a year and they are better. There are men who struggle many years, and they are better still. But there are those who struggle all their lives: these are the indispensable ones.'<sup>25</sup> The revolutionary struggle needs and depends on men and women who dedicate their whole lives to the struggle, for the full emancipation of the poorest of the poor and the wretched masses of South Africa.

In 1991, the gallant fighter and visionary of the movement, the late Cde Chris Hani, visited Port Elizabeth, accompanied by the former SANDF Chief Cde Timothy Ngwenya 'Bra T', to create a regional MK structure. I was to be Deputy Regional Commander (Commissar) of the Eastern Cape, and Cde Lungile Magxwalisa, Regional Commander. To paraphrase him, Cde Chris said that when we take over political power and begin to have control of state resources, some comrades would be tempted to be corrupt and forget about their mandate and the practical problems that are faced by the poor people on the ground. His words were prophetic. At the 1991 conference at Venda University, he said that he would not want to be part of a government bureaucracy when we take over, but rather to remain in the Communist Party with the sole purpose of keeping it strengthened. Perhaps that made him 'enemy number one' for the right wingers involved in his assassination in 1993.

I personally organised a lunch venue for comrades Chris and 'Bra T' while they were in Port Elizabeth. It was at my relative's place in Swartskopville because my cousin Mr Botany had a big house that could accommodate all of us. Whereas another leader would have wanted to be hosted in a plush restaurant, Cde Chris preferred that arrangement even though we could afford to spoil them with the latter. Comrades who were there at the time can testify to what I am saying. As said by National Liberation Struggle leader of Guinea-Bissau, Amilcar Cabral, 'tell no lies and claim no easy victories.' I detest any fabricating and lying about one's struggle background and credentials to gain an advantage or access to benefits. I can hardly count how many times I met people who lied that they were MK cadres who trained in Angola. When I dug deeper as to when and at which military camp they trained, they would become reluctant to continue the discussion and would sometimes disappear and avoid me, instead of being excited to meet a comrade. It is an excitement I always feel when I meet comrades I can talk to and reminisce about the past in the bush of Angola.

As a typical visionary, Cde Chris Hani, a Commander-in-Chief of uMkhonto weSizwe and a General Secretary of the Communist Party, single-handedly formed MK regional structures throughout the country as though he foresaw down the line that they would constitute a firm foundation for the facilitation of SANDF integration. When he created our regional MK Structure in PE and appointed me as a Regional Commissar, he advised me to create a commissariat. I did so: a commissariat comprising ten comrades including myself. Some



of these turned their backs on me when I was marginalised and under-ranked in the SANDF. One said, 'if you cannot beat them, join them', to rationalise their reason for dumping me; an indication of spinelessness and lack of principle.

I decided that the immediate task of the commissariat at the time, would be to visit all the branches of the ANC in the region, with the intention to first demystify the MK as a former so-called terrorist organisation, and to establish a good working relation with the mother body (ANC), that already had regional offices at the time. That process was part of the preparation for the 30th Anniversary of MK rally on 16 December 1991, where the newly formed MK regional structure was to be announced. The rally was held in one of the biggest stadia in PE, Dan Qeqe. It was also one of the first rallies ever in the country by an MK region since MK was formed on 16 December 1961. The rally attracted more than 60 000 people. Guest speakers were Cde Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Cde Holomisa, when he was still in charge of Transkei and a reliable militant member of the ANC.

In 1991, MK also held its first conference in the country at Venda University. The whole leadership was present including Cde O.R. I was responsible, as a Regional Commissar through MK HQ based in Shell House at the time, to organise the delegation. I remember negotiating with MK HQ to include an additional delegate Cde Richman Mti, a former Correctional Services Commissioner, who had just returned from exile. Shell House reluctantly agreed after I had motivated for his inclusion because I recognised his political and intellectual maturity, and felt that he could be an asset in the delegation and represent the region well in the conference. Even during the ANC Regional Conference at the University of Port Elizabeth, we managed to exert influence such that he was elected as a Regional Chairperson of the ANC. Our strategy was to have our own comrade who would be able to cooperate with us and understand the plight of the cadreship that was returning from exile. As MK we did not have our own offices, but settled in an ANC office in Standard House, that was well-resourced and organised. They used to lend us a kombi when we had to liaise with Border and Transkei MK Regions.

I dare say that if Cde Chris were still alive, I would not have been this angry and bitter, lamenting the issue of under-ranking and the resultant financial crisis. His death was one of the greatest losses the Movement ever encountered and, for me, a very devastating blow. It is

indeed a fact that has been proven by history and experiences, that those leaders who are genuinely humble and down to earth, who have the pulse of the situation on the ground and the interest of the voiceless and downtrodden masses at heart, are very rare and hard to find. In most cases, leaders tend to develop bureaucratic tendencies, with lethargic and detached attitudes towards the masses that they are supposed to represent. The gap between them and the masses expands when their wealth increases. Cde Chris was one of the few genuinely empathetic, especially about the plight of the MK combatants returning from exile in 1991/92 before he was assassinated in April 1993. I have now had practical experience of foot soldiers, who held ground and faced bullets, who were in the eye of the storm, but who are extremely easy to forget when there is a ceasefire and it is time to enjoy the fruits of freedom. May the revolutionary spirit of Cde Chris live on and empower us, especially under the current testing circumstances of our National Democratic Revolution and may his soul rest in eternal peace.

I so wish I could get clarity regarding Myburgh's book entitled, *The Gangster State; Unravelling Ace Magashule's Web of Capture*.<sup>26</sup> I never read the book, but as a critical person who takes nothing at face value, I am concerned with its title. For me, the title of a book is supposed to provide a reader with a hint as to what to expect in terms of the content. Why did he use the title 'Gangster State' when he was focusing on Ace Magashule as a single individual? From the denotative standpoint, the State is composed of three elements: Judiciary, Legislature, Executive. Even if he was referring to the Free State Provincial Government the reality is that he was dealing with an individual. The title gives the impression that he was referring to a South African Government made up of gangsters. Perhaps that is exactly what the author intended to achieve, whether consciously or unconsciously, as he represents class and material interests. Fellow South Africans and compatriots, it is high time that we, as citizens of this country, should acknowledge that during our current social transition, the dominant 'ideological hegemony' is that of a minority capitalist bourgeois class elite. That is why when the oppressed and poor masses of this country get poorer, and their material conditions deteriorate to the level of squalor and degradation, amid plenty and abundance while the rich get richer, it is business as usual. Yet it is such a contradiction, an abnormal, obscene, and absurd situation that borders on criminality especially as it occurs within the realm of 25 years of 'Freedom and Democracy for all.' Ours seems to

revolve around the freedom and right to vote after five years; now we are in the sixth five-year period and still without economic freedom.

Gramsci defines ideological hegemony as, 'The permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations.'<sup>27</sup> This is precisely what is prevailing under the current circumstances in our country, a pure class struggle particularly at an ideological level. That is why those who influence or decide which narrative is to be predominant during the national discourse are likely to be the intellectual representatives of the above-mentioned ideological hegemony. Hence, the current government under Black Africans is freely referred to in derogatory terms namely: 'Captured or Corrupt State', 'Gangster's State' without any challenge. The implication is 'incompetent or failed state' because it is ruled by Black Africans who are inherently incompetent. It is no wonder that the right-wing AfriForum managed successfully to create their own parallel National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) composed of Afrikaners (let alone an autonomous Afrikaner enclave (homeland) somewhere in one of the provinces). That implies that they do not recognise the one that is in existence under the current government. I find it very strange that they are allowed to carry on with private prosecution, yet the constitution explicitly prohibits racism. What an irony. Why can't the Constitutional Court declare the existence of such institutions invalid and unconstitutional as they would in other cases?

Gramsci also says that the 'Class Struggle involves contestation of 'hegemony' whereby the working class needs organic intellectuals of which the Communist Party is an expression, who must be able to engage and shape 'common sense' of society'.<sup>28</sup> In this regard I find the silence of our Communist Party, in most of the discourses, conspicuous against the ideological onslaught that is daily waged by the right-wing intellectuals. Under the current socioeconomic and political circumstances, we have right-wing 'hegemonic intellectuals' whose main task it is to protect the prevailing bourgeois capitalist status quo. It stands to reason that we must also necessarily have those that consciously endeavour to defend the vulnerable poorest of the poor Black African majority; left-wing intellectuals who must strongly advocate for the establishment of a new democratic order that should be biased in favour of the latter. That revolutionary and historic mission is supposed to be executed by what Lenin used to refer to as 'professional revolutionaries' who are not

only politically enlightened, but ideologically matured and conscious of their historic mission to liberate society. The agents of such change must necessarily embody, both in theory and practice, ethical leadership, whose main characteristic *inter alia* is revolutionary selflessness that is irreconcilable with bourgeois mindedness.

The consistency of the perpetuation of ideological hegemony and its psychological and propaganda effect, at times, ends up being believed and internalised, by those who strive to maintain it. My view is that by justifying the existence of the apartheid regime, F.W. de Klerk disqualified himself from being in possession of a Nobel Peace Prize, which is supposed to celebrate excellence. Tyrants and dictators in some countries end up with a false notion that they are on the right track, representing the interests of most of the society while dragging the whole country into the mud. The list of examples is worryingly long. As the situation currently stands, the right-wing intellectuals and their powerful support base from capital appear to have the upper hand. A popular book doing the rounds is Jacques Pauw's *The President's Keepers*<sup>29</sup> which documents evidence of cadres who protected former President Zuma prior to his ultimate imprisonment. The author was perpetuating a particular ideological hegemony that basically represents the past, as opposed to that for which left-wing democratic forces are striving, provided the corruption is terminated.

The whole situation therefore presupposes that the Black African majority is at the mercy of an immensely powerful capital that has no heart and compassion, bent on brutal exploitation for the maximisation of profit. This unfortunately occurs under the glare of Black African CEOs that have suddenly mushroomed to head huge corporates to constitute a form of buffer zone. Can it be really regarded as normal, that a worker on a daily basis digs involved in worth millions of rands, but is living a stone's throw away from the mine under conditions of degradation and uninhabitable squalor like at Lonmin Mine in Marikana? Why can't they use some of the profit to build decent houses for the workers and their families? The discovery of a large diamond at Cullinan was celebrated by an assembly of elites sipping expensive champagne, with hardly a mention of the workers who physically dug out the precious stone. In the system of capitalism, workers are regarded as nothing but an appendage to the machine of production, and are subjected to humiliating and brutal alienation that renders them dehumanised and powerless.

Ironically, workers are engaged simultaneously in two contradictory and mutually exclusive processes. The creation of wealth for the few, and the creation of poverty, degradation, and misery for themselves as a majority in society. What makes matters worse is that in our country we have self-centred, egoistic, stingy and merciless capitalists who lack patriotism. We have a stubborn predominantly white capitalist class that is perpetuating the same economic structural set-up of the apartheid era. That is why South Africa ranks among the highest in the world when it comes to worker dissatisfaction and labour unrest. Admittedly, the capitalist system in South Africa post 1994 is gradually deracialising, for indeed in the final analysis, capitalism knows no colour.

Just take your time and notice, when driving or moving around the country, how you will see mostly Black Africans overall-clad, digging, sweating, building roads and houses and skyscrapers, and residential estates where the rich and wealthy live while they (the builders) are living in squalid conditions. In the mines and factories and on farms they work 24/7. Digging for minerals, manufacturing clothes or harvesting food. They are paid a pittance, while a few are enriched. What an absurd contradiction! Poor souls, when they see luxurious Mercedes Benzes, BMWs, Range Rovers and SUVs – you name them – and the beautiful shopping malls they have built with their own hands, blood, sweat and tears. Yet they are overwhelmed and intimidated by them; alienated and estranged from their own creation, as if they are the products of the powers external to them. No other social group in capitalist society is taken for granted, and relegated to nothingness more than the toiling, downtrodden Black African working masses.

Marx explains the pathetic situation thus:

The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means

that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.<sup>30</sup>

In our specific case, the situation will remain the same until there is not just rhetorical, but practical Radical Economic Transformation. For that to occur, a pragmatic approach is required. Cooperation from capital and its allied partners is of paramount importance. We can just hope and pray that it does materialise under our current President Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, who seems to be genuinely concerned about the slow pace of economic transformation of the Black African masses as the biblical ‘drawers of water and hewers of wood’ (Joshua 9:21).

It is a fact that has been proved by experiences of revolutionary struggles throughout the world, that you cannot expect to effect revolutionary changes in a society without trampling on other people’s toes who have vested interests in it, thereby disrupting the socioeconomic and political state of equilibrium with which they have been comfortable for generations. It can never be ‘business as usual’ unless the changes you intend to implement would be merely cosmetic and reformist. Revolutionary changes inherently and inevitably lead to the destabilisation of the balance and condition of equilibrium and can never be easily accepted by those forces whose class/material interests are entangled and tied up with that socioeconomic and political system. Lenin spoke about the ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’; implying that you must not negotiate when it comes to your transformational and revolutionary agenda, as a matter of principle. The process has an element of coercion, all the state resources being contested for the ultimate objective of revolutionary transformation. Under the current circumstances, the question that needs to be asked is – as the most important component part of the state machinery – what process or interests does the judicial system currently serve? Does it contribute towards the resolution of the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and unemployment, or remain an armchair observer that only responds when requested to do so by political parties to suit their interests: a passive and reactive role? Is it for transformation or maintenance of the moribund status quo? Neutrality is tantamount to guilt by omission. In the words of former Chief Justice Moegoeng Moegoeng,

If you are indifferent because you occupy a position that pays you well, if you are indifferent to the plight of the

people in Diepsloot and elsewhere in the country because you are comfortable, you live in a suburb, know that you are a traitor; and you are a traitor of our Constitution.<sup>31</sup>

Anyone who can recall the speech of the Chief Justice will concur with me that he was extremely concerned about the situation in the country. As we know him, he is not the type to shy away from articulating social issues. Since 1994, there has been an extensive absorption of Black Africans into the capitalist class. That is why, during the Marikana massacre, the order to shoot was not from a white man but from a black man, in protection of capital that a Black African has suddenly become a part of, whereas, during the apartheid era, the situation would have been vice versa, with the bulk of the police who were to shoot being white, as in the Sharpeville and Soweto shootings. Just listen to our previous Minister of Finance Cde Tito Mboweni, who seems to have fallen in love with the capitalist system. Strategically positioned in our economy, he is supposed to lead the transformation. Instead, any mention of nationalisation makes him cringe. In his tweets, said to be followed by 695 600, he once said, 'Not so long ago, I was a free man, no political constraints. Then I agreed, voluntarily to join government, Tjoooo! Free but not free!! You have to obey the majority/collective decisions! Sometimes it feels like swallowing a rock.' I am surprised by Cde Tito's language, because I always thought of him as a stalwart and a veteran of the ANC, who knows the politics of collectivism and democratic centralism. Now I am beginning to know why, from time to time, he behaves like a self-opinionated spoilt brat among his Cabinet ANC colleagues. If he does not want to follow the collective of his cabinet comrades, some of whom we know are not necessarily radical in terms of their perspective of economic transformation but just pay lip service, who at some point denied that there is White Monopoly Capital, what can we expect? It means we can only expect neo-liberal economic policies that are biased in favour of capital at the expense of the suffering Black African majority who are still yearning for economic freedom.

The challenges that we are facing have now have reached a crisis point and require the convergence of all the great minds of our society, including the owners of capital, to provide solutions. During a revolutionary transition, compromise is essential. The issue of 'land expropriation without compensation' requires compromise by rich commercial farmers. The nationalisation of key sectors of the economy

requires compromise by White Monopoly Capital and its apologists. Adaptation of the Constitution to conform with the objectives of the National Democratic Revolution is necessary. Alternatively, the possibility of another revolution, which is likely to be characterised by a spontaneous upsurge, cannot be ruled out. It must be understood that a revolution is not something that is imposed from above or decided in air-conditioned boardrooms by a group of well-fed intellectuals who indulge in intellectual gymnastics behind decorated and colourful rostrums. On the contrary, it emerges by virtue of practical necessity, occasioned by the concrete socioeconomic and material conditions of most of a society when the masses, in their multitudes of millions, reach a stage where they can no longer tolerate living under the conditions of squalor, degradation, and grinding poverty in the midst of plenty. Government must engage in a serious persuasive discussion with our bourgeois/capitalist compatriots, so that they loosen up and become patriotic just for a change. They must be made to be more part of the solution, rather than the problem. For instance, the R10 million that was donated by the Oppenheimer family to our current incumbent before the 2019 elections, could have been used for the social upliftment of the poorest of the poor Black Africans. Furthermore, a serious effort must be exerted to stop comrades in senior positions from looting the coffers of the State, thereby denuding the wherewithal needed to cater for the basic services that are desperately needed by the poor.

I sometimes wish that we could have more philanthropic capitalists like Mark Shuttleworth who voluntarily gave his 21 employees R1 million, when his business was flourishing. What an act of philanthropy and compassion! It is ironic that a foreigner all the way from America, Ms Oprah Winfrey had to come to South Africa to build a state-of-the-art Girls High School for Black African pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. As Africans, we have always adhered to inherited cultural traditions, customs, rituals and norms to keep us glued together and organised as a community. Under the current circumstances it appears to be exceedingly difficult to adhere to those practices. This is due to the negative and destructive influences of the capitalist/bourgeois-minded lifestyle. The emergence post-1994 of crass materialism, individualism, egoism, and self-centredness that used to be foreign to us as Black Africans, has tended to reduce all forms of human interaction to impersonal material relations based on naked self-interest. The nouveau riche Black Africans who have easily accumulated wealth under the



current democratic dispensation (*Izityeba Mva*) flaunt their opulent lifestyles on reality TV, expecting us to watch in envy. Prince Mashele, in his column entitled, 'Display of shallow money via reality shows dupes the poor into indolent wishful life' correctly wrote that, 'the most discerning among us will notice that no single person who appears on Forbes Magazine's List has a Reality Show. Only idiots who bumped into money yesterday invite TV cameras into their homes.'<sup>32</sup> In one of the episodes of *Kwa Mam Khize*, we witnessed uMam Khize giving his son Andile R1 million, just to make a lousy musical video with his friends, with scantily clad young girls dancing in the pool, despite the fact he is not basically a musician or an artist. A young man is seen bragging about having bought a Snickers costing R87 000, saying sarcastically that the amount could buy a three-roomed house. As a 'born free' he seems to be blind to the possibility that his parents might have grown up in such a township house. In a *Madam and Mercy* TV episode, we also saw Madam organising a party themed on one of the expensive labels. To attend, you had to wear a Versace or Louis Vuitton brand label. Such displays of opulence are often the outcome of tenderpreneurship, those who suddenly had access to company tenders worth millions of rands, through connections with the political elite. There are some who acted, and are still acting, as a front for rich white companies, to adhere to the so-called B-BBEE regulation that stipulates that a certain percentage of the ownership of those companies must be in the hands of Black Africans. And yet you will hear some of them making noise, trying to convince us about how hard they worked to be where they are. Some seem to have forgotten, (or are sufficiently politically naïve to fathom) the objective fact that they are being co-opted and constitute a mere buffer zone between White Monopoly Capital and the downtrodden, wretched poorest of the poor Black African masses.

In my household, those TV shows that are among our favourites are *Living the dream with Somizi*, *Being Bonang*, *Madam and Mercy*, *Johannesburg Housewives*. Personally, I do enjoy watching the glitter and glamour which is interesting, and quite a feast for sore eyes anyway, including *Top Billing* that exhibits the mostly white middle-class glamorous lifestyle. Lately it is beginning to reorientate and is becoming inclusive, which confirms my view that has been expressed elsewhere, that our capitalism is deracialising and is gradually becoming multiracial. There are still some programmes such as those that explore

issues that affect and deal with ordinary people on the ground like *Reatsotela*, *Kukithi La*, *Uyadyola Nine nine* and *Mamazala*. I regard myself as one of the most progressive-minded South Africans. I am not homophobic, but for Somizi to display explicit romantic gestures during his shows, like cuddling and kissing another man, who happens to be his lover, is really embarrassing because during the airing we are watching with our children. Maybe it would be a good idea if his show could be aired late at night, when the children are asleep like other programmes with age limits. For it is a fact that gay relationships are not a usual phenomenon, though some of us accept and understand why they exist.

If you look at some of the reality shows, you will discover that there is an element of 'Ekasi Township' mentality. For instance, just watch *Johannesburg Housewives* and see those beautifully dressed women, who look so cultured and sophisticated, sometimes arguing aggressively, exposing each other in an embarrassing way. Perhaps the saying that 'you can take a person out of the bush, but you cannot take the bush out of a person' is applicable here. Another irony is that you will never find such an obscene display of private wealth and opulence from the Motsepe or Maponya families who are well-known within Black African communities, and whose wealth and richness were derived out of sweat and hard work from the humble beginnings during the difficult time of apartheid rule long before 1994. Under the prevailing conditions of South African capitalism that encourages self-enrichment, money mongering and obsession with wealth and accumulation, virtues such as humaneness, solidarity, sympathy, honesty, kind-heartedness, humility, integrity, compassion, empathy, genuine love are very difficult to find. Love tends now to be based on materialism. Love affairs are seen as a transaction whereby girlfriends are supposed to get what is called a 'girlfriend allowance' (*Imali yomqamelo*). The situation has permeated and negatively impacted upon the very foundation and nucleus of the society namely, the family. As Prince Mashele puts it, 'reality shows dupe the poor into indolent wishful life; influencing our own children to aspire to be money-mongers.' It has become normal for our grandmothers (*ooMagogo*) to be robbed of their grants that are meant to feed them, by their own grandchildren. South Africa is surely the only country where people burn and vandalise schools for whatever reason. Sometimes a child is even slaughtered alive like an animal, to extract certain bodily organs on instruction of the so called *Isangoma* for *Umuthi*. I once heard of a father who sexually molested and raped

his own biological daughter from the age of eight years until the age of 15 years. Just imagine the horror that poor girl was subjected to for so many years with no one noticing. The occurrence of such despicable acts of horror is barbaric and I can understand why some are calling for the death penalty to be revisited. At the same time, I do understand why the ANC-led Government abolished it. A person can be found guilty and sentenced to death and be hanged, only to find out later that it was a mistake. Our judicial system is far from being perfect. The Justice Department spends millions on legal defence of civil and litigation cases, by people who were wrongly accused. Mathabo and I wanted to send Siphesihle to Rhodes University but after hearing news of the rape of students and mass protest, we decided that she should rather attend the University of Pretoria in close proximity.

The very nature and extent of the sickeningly widespread looting of public resources by public servants, who are supposed to serve communities, coupled with a sense of entitlement, has an element of abnormality at a psychological level. Does it really make sense that a CEO of PRASA can buy a property worth R36 million, after being employed for only 12 months? That issue also flabbergasted the Deputy Chief Justice Zondo. Several such cases are keeping the hands of the Zondo Commission very full, and I will not be surprised if they request another extension from the president.

In the final analysis, for the social-ills of our society to be obliterated once and for all, would require a total change of mindset. Cde Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was correct when he said that 'the most difficult thing is not to change society but to change yourself.' As I am writing, I cannot claim that I have changed. In fact, I am still in the process of effecting positive changes in my own personality, that I hope, if achieved, will constitute a reservoir for my children and those close to me so that they can be better and productive citizens of society. The process of endeavouring to change oneself is supposed to be a lifelong process that requires a deliberate and conscious effort because of the negative prejudices that were inculcated in us through social conditioning. I personally know comrades who were with me in exile and used to be very eloquent and knowledgeable in articulating the dynamics of the struggle. Today they are bourgeois-orientated and self-centred. An exception is our current President Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, who wholeheartedly embraced the ideology of the oppressed, despite the capitalist material conditions of his personal existence.

The main reason for inertia in the mindset of most South Africans is our preference, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to be proudly Shangaan, Ndebele, Afrikaner, Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Venda, Pedi, Sotho, Swati; still painfully trapped in our racial and tribal cocoons. Let alone patriarchal prejudice that is geared towards the subjection of our womenfolk to gender stereotyping, reducing them into objects of man's gaze, gratification and aggressive animal nature as exemplified by the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide that has become a pandemic in our society. Furthermore, a shocking education system has imbued us with negativity and false consciousness, that did not prepare or provide us with any psychological or intellectual repertoire for the challenges of creating a new progressive socioeconomic, political, and cultural system. I should think we must go back to the drawing board, and adopt the stance that Steve Biko was at pains to propagate, namely mental liberation. This is freedom within the realm of consciousness and mindset before institutionalisation. For me that should have been a starting point.

Land/space is a very scarce resource for us as Black Africans, because one thing that the apartheid colonialist government deprived us of as the oppressed majority, was access to space/land. They even went to the extent of legislating, when they implemented the Land Act in 1913, to ensure that we did not have access to land despite the vastness of the country with fertile land. As a result, it has become quite normal to find a Black African family of ten living in a three-roomed house. I want to believe that even the very 'Pantsula jive' of our townships, which is very economic when it comes to space, might have developed to suit the limited space we are living in. That is why you will never find a Black African child trying to practice ballet, which requires a lot of space. The very government that is supposed to do things differently, ended up building matchbox RDP houses that are ridiculously small even though we as Black Africans basically have large families, unlike white people. Now lately, most of the developers currently building houses especially for us as so-called middle-income earners, who are mostly working in government as public servants, are doing the same, perpetuating the structural set-up of the past on a more tolerable level. Just go around the country and look at the newly built houses that are nicely painted for black public servants. When you stand next to the house you can almost touch your neighbour with other houses having no space between them for even a garage.

Personally, on that topic, for a change I am quite satisfied because I recently bought a house for just R800 000 from an Afrikaner working class family, which is in a very tranquil area and that has a big yard relatively speaking. It has ten trees, three water taps in the yard, with sprinklers for irrigation and requires weekly gardening services and has plenty of potential for further improvement if I happen to be financially capacitated. It also has a stand-alone flatlet that has a shower and a kitchen, the same size as your normal RDP house. If our financial situation does not improve soon, perhaps we will end up renting out the flatlet. But it is my intention not to, because I respect my privacy and that of my family's. The moment you have someone in your yard, your privacy is invaded. Because of the big yard, at least I will be able to bask in the sun, reading and licking my wounds of marginalisation, cogitating upon the way forward, listening to the melodic sound of the birds without any disturbance. As I am growing old and mature, I am becoming more comfortable with myself and my thoughts than friends are who are more likely to be toxic with the PHDS (Pull Him Down Syndrome). I am saying this from experience, for it is indeed exceedingly difficult these days to find genuine friends. The capitalistic nature of our country, that has strongly permeated our former relatively conservative Black African lifestyle, is gradually making people become egoistic and opportunistic, which prevents them from being able to constitute genuine and reliable friends. The post-1994 socioeconomic conditions and the concomitant bourgeois tendencies seem to have succeeded in destroying genuine comradeship that is supposed to be rooted in political and ideological conviction.

During the unfortunate Coronavirus lockdown, apart from my family and writing, I have been in the particularly good company of *A Story of my Life* by Joshua Nyongolo Nkomo, a leader of Zimbabwe People's Liberation Army (ZIPRA) during the National Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe. It is a painful story of betrayal by his own comrades; a story to which I can relate very well. Furthermore, as a former MK guerrilla fighter, I know very well how our own guerrilla doctrine as uMkhonto weSizwe was influenced by the guerrilla warfare of Zimbabwe. Apart from that, to prevent 'lockdown blues' I also managed to recall, from memory, ten choral songs I used to conduct as a choirmaster both in the bush in Angola and in Robben Island Prison. I have recorded them on my cell phone singing different parts of the choir namely, soprano, tenor and baritone in harmony. These recorded

songs actually form part of the heritage of MK. The white working class of the apartheid era had large houses with servants' quarters and a garage, and green trees lining the streets, as opposed to the matchbox houses in the townships. I was incredibly lucky to find this relatively comfortable and spacious home for my family, in a tranquil suburb.

The tendency of the mindset to be stagnant relates to contradictions between the Productive Forces and Production Relations under capitalism. Cde Kgalema Motlanthe explained the contradiction as being a consequence of the productive forces developing at a faster rate than the form of ownership and distribution (production relations). That is why we are currently talking about the Fourth Industrial Revolution. A remarkably high level of technological development that mankind had never imagined or dreamt of before. However, the form of ownership and distribution of wealth is as stagnant and static as it was hundreds of years ago. Instead, the wealth of society gets more concentrated in the hands of the few, while the majority live under uninhabitable squalid conditions, despite the vast opportunities opened by technological development. The First and the Third World continue to co-exist our country. That basically means that while the colonisers lived luxuriously in towns and suburbs, the colonised were concentrated in squalid townships mostly in uninhabitable conditions, only allowed to go to town conditionally with a *domboek* (*dompas*) in hand, when the 'Master' wanted to make use of their cheap labour.

Even when you listen to both Black African and white bourgeois economists on TV, you get the impression that the market forces they always make noise about, are an external force that is beyond human control. Yet, in the final analysis, what is at play is a pure, inhumane, profit-driven system that does not even want the State to intervene on behalf of the poorest of the poor masses. The surplus of easy-to-produce consumables in the system end up shredded, destroyed and thrown away to create a demand, all in the name of profit. In July 2009, after the start of the recession, economists held a seminar in London to discuss the question: What is wrong with Economics? This revealed that a growing number of economists felt that the mainstream theory has no relevance. Nobel Prize winner, Paul Krugman made an astonishing admission. He said, the last 30 years' development in macroeconomic theory has at best been spectacularly useless or at worst directly harmful. This judgement is a fitting epitaph for the theories of bourgeois economics. The article further stated that: 'Even the Vatican's official newspaper, L'Ossevatore

Romano, published an article in 2009 praising Marx's diagnosis of income inequality, which is quite an endorsement for the man who declared religion to be opium of the people. *Das Capital* is now a best seller in Germany, in Japan it has been published in a manga version.<sup>33</sup>

My personal background, in its entirety (aside from my growing up and until adolescence before I began to have a certain degree of self-awareness) was constituted by two events: my stay in the bush in Angola, and my incarceration in Robben Island Prison. A third post-formative stage has been characterised by the deterioration of my socioeconomic situation. How I wish it could be characterised by a sense of accomplishment and happiness instead of anger and bitterness. In normal conversations, people talk about their backgrounds in terms of having been in high schools or universities. Mine revolves around having been in the Angolan bush and Robben Island Prison.

Indeed, I would have wished to be judged, not in terms of my current position as an under-ranked Warrant Officer in the SANDF, but rather on where I have come from as a former dedicated MK Freedom Fighter. We are all shaped by our past, however good or bad it might have been. The mistake some people make, especially in my work environment, is to judge in terms of the former which is an absolute distortion of who I really am. I will always be immensely proud of having been part of that historic process of the Struggle and the noble cause that was led by the ANC, that I will remain so, until the day I die.

Sometimes when I sit down and think deeply, I do count my blessings and say thanks to God that I was not one of the unsung heroes or heroines who perished during the Struggle. Despite the marginalisation, lack of recognition and acknowledgement of my contribution in the Struggle, no one can dare dispute the fact that I was there when very few dared to be there. That is a reality that cannot be deleted by any form of marginalisation. That *inter alia* is the reason why I have decided to pen it down so that even when I am no more, my children will know their father's credentials in the Struggle and how he contributed and sacrificed for the Freedom and Democracy in this country. That is a legacy I want to leave them and any others who happen to be sympathetic towards my plight.

## CHAPTER 6

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# Deployment, arrest, trial and sentence

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Again, as usual out of nowhere, *Umchina* arrived, but this time to take me. I was driven from the bush to Luanda, and from there I was flown to Mozambique and taken to Machava village, since our residence in Matola was destroyed in the Matola raid. That is where I met the comrades who belonged to the Special Ops, including Cde Rashidie, who was senior in the unit. I subsequently heard that he was working in the Reserve Bank.

From Mozambique I was taken to the Steak House Lodge in Ezulwini, Swaziland, as a Mr Simelani and was stationed there with a comrade. On a cool Saturday Cde Burney Moelekwane and Cde Faku (who recently retired from the SANDF as a Brigadier General) arrived and took me to town to shop for clothing that would have been apparently suitable to the South African environment, and to familiarise myself with the currency. Then they drove me back to the lodge. We stayed there longer than was anticipated, to such an extent that our allowances got depleted. We even thought that the Movement had forgotten us. My local girlfriend assisted me logistically.

When we were just about to give up hope, Cde Pule (who once worked in the Defence Intelligence Division and is now retired), arrived. He was a Godsend.

Apparently Cde Burney and Cde Faku had been arrested by the Swati Police and deported to Mozambique, a common occurrence amongst our comrades during that period. The Swati Police once shot at our vehicle and hit Cde Jackie (combat name), of Special Ops, in the head. The wound resulted in a brain haemorrhage that subsequently left him mentally disturbed. He was a pathetic sight. As per instructions from the leadership, there was not to be a retaliation under those



circumstances. On their side of the deal, the Swati Police were not to deport us to South Africa.

Whilst in a deep sleep, still at the lodge, *Umchina* arrived unannounced, at an ungodly hour of the morning. It dawned on me that my day had come to engage and face the state machinery of the apartheid regime. I was prepared and ready. We were taken on an exceedingly long drive towards the Swaziland border. With me in the car were Cde Mawiza, Cde Faku and Cde Bra Vick 'Muchvalue' at the wheel. Cdes Faku and Cde Bra Vick dropped us near the border and wished us good luck. I was carrying a Makarov on my waist, and a sling bag with clothing and R10 000 cash. At the time, the highest banknote denomination was R20. The wad of notes required a bag.

The name that was reflected on my ID was Alpheus Khumalo, *Umntungwa Umbilase*, a Zulu speaker. Cde Mawiza's ID reflected Ntsele, also a Zulu speaker. As the area was strictly isiZulu-speaking Cde Mawiza had to be the one who was to do the most talking, since he was a Zulu but from Soweto. At one stage, it was discovered that I was not really into isiZulu because of my use of the word '*isihlangu*' instead of '*isicathulo*' (a shoe). However, I manoeuvred my way out of an awkward situation by relating what was referred to in MCW as a 'legend', namely a convincing story for such a situation.

We were supposed to be based at eMahlabathini, where the compound of Gatsha was situated. Cde Mawiza, who was nine years older than me, had participated in blowing up the Sasolburg refinery and had survived the Matola Raid in 1981. He explained that the intention had been to capture but not kill in that raid, so that there would be a treason trial, a finding of high treason, conspiracy against the state and sabotage, with a resultant mandatory death sentence. That would have signalled a victory for the regime. During the raid SA Security Forces were sporting Frelimo uniforms and darkened faces, and speaking Portuguese. They approached the double storey residence where the comrades were staying and called them. The comrades obviously mistook them for Frelimo soldiers on routine patrol. The comrades were then instructed to get into armoured personnel carriers (APC) that were parked nearby. Cde Mawiza began to flee but was one of 13 who were mowed down and died instantly. Cde Mbhena (combat name), whose real name was Siphon Thobela, later a colleague in Defence Intelligence, was asleep upstairs when that raid occurred, apparently after a drinking spree. He awoke to the sound of fire and responded with a Papashaya Russian assault rifle.

He sustained a wound that resulted in one of the longest scars that I had ever seen, on his stomach. I also worked with Cde Mbhena in Debrug Demobilisation Centre and observed his love of his beer (Hansa). I used to joke with him that his lack of appetite was because of his shorter than average intestine.

While we were still at the eMahlabathini area there was a shooting incident that compelled us to evacuate the area. We left for Nkandla and were based in the cottage of Abigail Zungu, a teacher in that area. Whilst we were still trying to figure out how to exit the area; in the early hours of the morning of 9 October 1982, we were woken up by a loud knock at the door. It was quite clear that they were security police with Land Rovers flashing lights. We were in a single room with only one door. I woke up in pitch darkness. After quickly getting dressed, I walked towards Cde Mawiza who was at the other bed, to ensure that he was carrying his Makarov pistol. Because it was dark, I had to feel it with my hand to ensure that it was indeed in his hand. In the tense situation, he managed not to be panic-stricken and freeze. Abigail tried to light a candle, but, in hushed tones we discouraged her and directed her to leave the room. At that moment of shock and fear, I had butterflies in my stomach, which is scientifically associated with the body's fight or flight response, when the brain perceives a potential threat to survival. I could certainly feel my body getting engulfed by goosebumps, that turned into what is normally referred to as an adrenalin rush, making my movements almost mechanical. At that moment of reacting and the activation of adrenalin, fear is conquered.

I think that is the most dangerous situation in which any soldier can land because his or her normal rational self is no longer in control. The dangerous 'animal' self takes over. Military training instincts for self-preservation take over. The most challenging thing during such a moment, is to overcome the unavoidable initial fear and shock. It is a fear and shock accompanied by clear recognition that killing and dying are the inevitable outcome. It is a complex process that can only be appropriately explained by a person who has been through the experience and survived to tell the tale. The words of Cde Rolihlahla Mandela are relevant, 'I learned that courage is not the absence of fear but triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.'

Both armed with Makarov pistols, we went out firing. Cde Mawiza suddenly collapsed just outside the door, apparently hit above his eye,

and died instantly. I fired and one of the policemen was hit in the face. He too died instantly. The details of the scene of crime would only be revealed during the trial when colour photographs of everything were exhibited in court. My shot was intended to harass so that we could escape, before any of the police could raise their heads to have the opportunity to shoot and kill me. The logic is simple; you cannot raise your head and fire comfortably if you are under fire from the opposite direction. Like a boxer during a fight, when he delivers a punch, he automatically opens and become vulnerable.

I managed to break through and ran away as far away from the scene as possible. The cottage was on high ground and as I escaped, I could see the lights of the Land Rovers. I moved far from them, until I could not see them anymore. I just kept on walking, until it was light. During that day I mostly traversed low-lying ravines, to avoid being seen from a helicopter. Deep in the bushes, I happened upon a number of owls and their nests. According to African mythology, seeing an owl is a bad omen, symbolising death. I kept on walking that day until it was dark. I slept in a dried up section of the ravine. Exhausted, hungry, shivering from cold and fear, in pitch darkness, I was isolated in a place here no human being could reach. Out of sheer exhaustion, my body fortunately managed to relax, and I eventually fell in a very deep, almost unconscious sleep.

When I woke up, I wished I could have continued to sleep forever. That morning, I just continued walking, without even knowing where I was going until I reached some isolated homesteads. When I tried to approach one of the houses to ask for water, the people ran away. I also ran away, fully aware that the security police were around. While walking I could see bakkies in the distance. I did not take them seriously, until one stopped a short a distance from me, and a policeman with an R4 rifle got out. It was late afternoon. There had been a massive manhunt with several policemen in the area. I had used all eight cartridges in the Makarov magazine during the skirmish the previous day. Despite that, I took it out as if to respond and ran away, hoping to be shot and killed but was only shot in my right arm. That was 10 October 1982, five days after my 20th Birthday.

I was arrested, beaten to a pulp, and tied like an animal in the back of an open bakkie, with the wound on my arm bleeding profusely. Strangely it immediately started to rain, and the people in the surrounding homesteads arrived to satisfy their curiosity. I could see

by their facial expressions that they were horrified and disgusted by what they saw. Few seemed to pity me. For them, I appeared to be an outcast or a dangerous criminal. I was taken to Eshowe Police Station and subjected to horrendous beatings and was called a 'professional terrorist' for having killed a policeman and then managing to make a break. They told me that Cde Mawiza was still alive and had defected to their side. I was so psychologically disorientated that, at one point I believed them, although I had seen him die just next to me.

In a high treason trial, admitting that you killed, was tantamount to inviting the death sentence upon yourself. I flatly refused to sign a confession that I had killed a policeman. I still cannot believe how I managed to escape the death sentence, even for what they call 'Common Purpose' in legal terms. The judge said that the state could not prove beyond reasonable doubt, that I had inflicted a fatal wound on the policeman.

After an exceedingly long time, with a bullet still lodged in my arm, covered only by a bandage, I was taken to Eshowe Hospital. Even in such a vulnerable and weak position, I was escorted as though I was an extremely dangerous person, to the surprise of people in the hospital. The post-operation wound required five stitches. I guess that the doctor who operated on me was in the Security Branch. To extract a bullet only requires a small incision.

During my detention, I had an unexpected visit from my mother accompanied by my sister uNombulelo. Just imagine that after so long the visit was awkward, and I did not want my family to see me in that physical and psychological state. I was a total wreck. The Security Branch deliberately allowed that visit, just to traumatise my family. If they were that concerned, they could have permitted the visit when I was in Pietermaritzburg Prison awaiting trial. Indelibly etched in my mind are the words my mother uttered before they left, '*Mntanam Ungathengisi*', (my son does not sell-out). I never forgot that about that visit and at the time, I needed such words of encouragement. Whilst in detention, you are at your most vulnerable; all alone in the face of the might of the brutal state machinery, where your mind is charged to operate at optimum level. The only company I had was a Bible. I had no choice but to read through it from Genesis to Revelation, without critical reflection.

As a matter of formality, I appeared at the Eshowe Magistrates Court to be told of the charges I was to face, and that the case was to be transferred

to the Supreme Court of Pietermaritzburg. After appearing at the local Magistrates Court, I was immediately transferred to the maximum-security prison in Pietermaritzburg. I then received visits from my legal representatives. They were Mr Silas Nkanunu (an instructing attorney); Mr Wilson, Senior Counsel (who at some stage was adjudicating in the TRC); the late Mr Pius Langa (former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, but then just a junior advocate during the trial); my relative, who later became Justice of the Constitutional Court, but was then a mere advocate, Mr Thembile Skweyiya; and Mrs Nonyamezelo Mxenge – accompanied by an exceptionally beautiful lady named Ntombekhaya. Mrs Nonyamezelo Mxenge had been the wife of Cde Griffiths Mxenge, who had been killed by Askaris. Sadly, Mrs Nonyamezelo Mxenge was also later killed by Askaris. A family who were brutally killed because they had served as human rights lawyers to defend political activists. May their souls rest in eternal peace. At the beginning of the 1980s, apartheid laws did not allow Black Africans to become senior counsel. Thus, Mr Pius Langa assumed the role of a junior advocate. Mr Wilson, as a white man, was senior counsel. I was sentenced on 19 May 1983 to 17 years imprisonment. There was a general expectation that I would be sentenced to death, and I also thought so because in the same dock three other comrades of my age were sentenced to death. The intention was to discourage other young people from joining the struggle. In my community in Port Elizabeth there were prayer meetings; the community expecting that I was going to be hanged. Complicating the case was that just after my arrest, Gatsha Buthelezi had made a statement that the ANC wanted to assassinate him. In response Secretary General Cde Alfred Nzo, said the ANC could never intend to assassinate him, but he would just wither politically.

Before I was taken to Robben Island, I went through Point Maximum Prison in Durban and Leeukop Maximum Prison in Johannesburg, where we were to constitute a group before being ferried to Robben Island Prison. These days when I am en route from Thabatshwane, my eye sometimes catches a board next to the prison, inscribed ‘Gallows’ with an arrow pointing towards Kgosi Mampuru Pretoria Maximum Prison. It reminds me that I nearly became an inmate there.

When I was hunted like a wild animal in the bushes of eNkandla in KwaZulu-Natal (then known as Natal) on the ninth and tenth of October 1982 and got shot in my arm, I honestly expected that I was going to be killed. However, as a hardened, tried and tested veteran of single cells

from three maximum security jails (Pietermaritzburg; Point in Durban, and Leeukop in Johannesburg) and six months detention at Eshowe Police Station in KwaZulu-Natal, it was not much of an ordeal. I had developed an inbuilt survival mechanism and was already numbed and conditioned towards the whole terrible setup, particularly, after I had escaped the death sentence in the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg on 19 May 1983.

When I first arrived on Robben Island, I was excited, hoping to see other comrades, some that I had last seen many years back in the Angolan bush, only to be thrown into an isolation cell in C-Section, rather than a communal cell. To be shackled both hands and feet; dragging those shackles and chains while walking slowly through the shiny corridors of the prison, led by a nasty white racist warder, with a face full of hatred, saying '*kom, kom, kom, kom*' was acutely belittling. He expected me to move faster than the shackles would allow. Common law prisoners and hardened tattooed criminals watched in awe, through the steel bars of their cells. Being thrown into a single windowless cell had become the normal way of life to which I had become accustomed.

In that situation, I obviously developed a thick skin. The most comfortable or rather tolerable cell was at Point Prison in Durban. There, every Sunday, I used to listen to soothing and beautiful religious hymns while lying on my back with only my deep thoughts as company. The hymns were sung by prisoners in the General sections. Apart from my relatives who were stationed in Durban for occasional visits, I had friendly neighbouring inmates such as young Mandla. He was always there when I needed a small favour. His morale was always high, and he seemed to have accepted that prison was his home. He was always around, sometimes out of his cell doing prison chores.

The worst and the most uncomfortable of all was Pietermaritzburg Prison. The main reason why I had been tried there, was an expectation that I was going to be sentenced to death by hanging. Only cold water was available for washing at that point during winter. I had to wake up early for the trial each day. Silly and mischievous racist warders dangled a rope next to my cell. It haunted me to think that the single cell I occupied had previously been occupied by comrades who were sentenced to death and executed. Those warders seemed to be so certain that I was also going to be hanged. How cruel? It was time to contemplate the 'death or imprisonment' warnings to which I had been conditioned during training at Funda. I did not care a damn because

I knew that I was not going to be the first to be hanged. For me that was part of the struggle. Shortly before my trial, three of my comrades were sentenced to death in the same dock of the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court. More so, my mindset was already geared towards anything, even the worst scenario.

I met other comrades from COSAS and members of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) including Joe Thloloe (Bra Joe as we used to call him), a veteran journalist and former media ombudsman in Leeukop Prison. While we were all in different single cells, the prison authorities used to allow us to be together during lunch time to play indoor games in one communal cell. It gave us an opportunity for political discussions. Probably owing to my experiences in prison, I still dislike indoor games of any sort. We used to play chess, Scrabble, draughts, Monopoly, cards, and Kerem, that seems to resemble Snook (I do not even know how to play Snook and do not want to try). I even won a table tennis contest during the summer games on Robben Island.

Unfortunately, our discussions in Leeukop Prison were never harmonious or peaceful because of the deeply historically rooted ideological gulf between the ANC and the PAC. I remember them once saying, as MK cadres, we were pawns of the Soviet KGB under the auspices of the late Cde Joe Slovo. Imagine I had narrowly survived a battle, with my comrade dying next to me, fighting for the liberation of this country. And then suddenly, my own black brother accusing me of being a 'pawn' to my face. Obviously, I was shocked and angry. I never expected such sentiment from a black person. But as a person who believed in emotional restraint, even in situations of extreme provocation, I managed to keep my cool. My belief has always been that when there is a conflict between your rational self (brain) and your emotional self (heart), ensure that the former reigns supreme because decisions based on emotions are unsustainable. During those types of unfruitful discussions, I normally ended up simultaneously defensive and offensive. That devastating statement coincided with the standpoint of the then Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange. He used to say that as MK cadres we were lackeys that were being used for the furtherance of the interests of the Russian communists with Joe Slovo as a figure head.

The common law prisoners held me in high regard and respected me as a Freedom Fighter. For them I was a hero who had survived and been captured during the propaganda onslaught against so-called

terrorists. When I arrived at Point Prison and got locked into a single windowless cell, I was desperate for a cigarette. Fortunately one was smuggled into my cell by friendly neighbouring inmates. Also, my Durban-based relatives (family of the late Constitutional Court Justice Thembile Skweyiya) brought me a tasty, home-cooked meal with a carton of cigarettes (Consulate) but without matches. They were a non-smoking household. A box of matches was later smuggled into my cell by friendly forces. As a token of my appreciation, I parted with one pack of cigarettes, which I gave to the 'courier' Mandla. Giving him that pack of cigarettes was a phenomenal thing to do under those circumstances. I also had an ally working in the kitchen. To my amazement, he had been in prison for 25 years. He looked healthy and younger than his age and one could see that the prison walls had protected him from the toxic stuff of the outside world. That friendship meant that small favours would occasionally come from the culinary department. There was a popular delicacy in prison that was called *phuzamandla*. It was a tasty dessert made of powder, yellow like custard. If it was mixed with water, it was not as tasty as when it was mixed with milk. So, my portion used to be constituted by the latter because I had a particularly good rapport with this *blou baadjie* in the kitchen.

A well-trained, groomed, and seasoned guerrilla was always characterised by a sense of humility, adaptability; rising to the occasion; always on his feet and in control of the situation and his surroundings, as stipulated in MCW. Under certain circumstances, even if you had a Markarov at your waist, you could let a person slap you and get away with it, if, in the final analysis, that person was going to allow you to carry on with the job you were required to do by the Revolution. But if he decided to constitute an obstacle; hard luck because he was going to be swallowed by the Revolution; collateral damage, so to speak.

Communication between me and other common law prisoners was strictly prohibited and had to be done clandestinely. In Point Prison, when the commanding officer saw me for the first time while doing the rounds with his administrative personnel, he was so shocked and could not believe how young I was. He asked me why I had to put myself in such a horrible situation at such a tender age. I wonder what the poor commanding officer says now, under the current democratic dispensation and freedom for which I was detained and incarcerated.



# Robben Island Prison

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In 1976, my brother was sentenced to seven years in the Grahamstown Supreme Court and sent to Robben Island Prison. Apparently, he was released shortly before I arrived in 1983. Sadly, he died in 2011. May his soul rest in eternal peace. When I arrived at the Island (as it was usually called) I was expecting that I would serve 17 years and would therefore be released in the year 2000, when I would have been 38 years old.

Robben Island Prison weighed on me more heavily, in terms of its impact on my psychological makeup and overall growth and self-development, than had the years in exile in the bush. This may be attributable to the number of years I served in both theatres of the revolutionary struggle. The former was more intensively focused on the political and intellectual development of the ANC cadres and there was plenty of time for that project at the disposal of the ANC in prison. I was therefore easily able to internalise the revolutionary principles of the organisation.

Consecutively, I resided in several sections of Robben Island Prison: C-Section (isolation cell *kulukuthu*), E-Section, F-Section and G-Section. C-Section seemed to have been an observation cell for the prison authorities before one was to be taken to the communal cell either to D-Section or E-Section. G-Section was where our elder comrades were incarcerated.

On arrival at the Island, an initial nasty experience while in the isolation cell (*kulukuthu*) in C-Section, was that one could not use ordinary soap (like Lux or Lifebuoy) when washing one's body, because it clung like grease and was exceedingly difficult to remove. Shampoo was the only effective product, while reliant solely on salty brackish sea water for washing. The coveted liquid was smuggled and sneaked into

my cell by a comrade whom I never knew or saw. When I received it, I said to myself, 'this is the original ANC (Congolese) I know, the ANC that responds promptly whenever a comrade is in need or dire straits'.

G-Section held the likes of Comrades Kgalema Motlanthe,<sup>34</sup> former Minister of Energy Cde Jeff Radebe,<sup>35</sup> (at one point my tutor in Mercantile Law at matric level), and Cde Ken 'DJ' Mphahlwa.<sup>36</sup> The Mphahlwa family, at the time, were one of the wealthiest Black African families in the Transkei, and extremely popular for their philanthropic and caring stance towards the community, especially the elderly. Despite their background, Cde DJ and Cde Mandisi decided to join the National Liberation Struggle. I salute them for that, because to join the Struggle, coming from that background, required an extremely high level of political consciousness.

A wall and fence divided F-Section from G-Section and held comrades including the current Minister of Police Cde Bheki Cele, former Deputy Minister of Finance Cde Sifiso Buthelezi, Cde (Doctor) Sbongiseni Dlomo (former MEC for Health in KZN), Cde (Doctor) Vijay Ramlakan, (former Surgeon General of the SANDF South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) and former personal doctor of Cde Rolihlahla Mandela), Cde James Mange and Cde Mickey Xhayiya – who with Cde Tokyo Sexwale once formed a very successful BEE Company (Mvelaphanda). Cde Tokyo Sexwale was in B-Section with the Rivonia trialists. Cde Harry Gwala and Jeff Masemola, both stalwarts of their respective organisations namely, the ANC and the PAC, were in the Hospital Section.

Once, when I was in the Hospital Section, I had an opportunity to be in the company of Bra Jeff (as he was popularly called) and listened to him. I initially thought that Bra Jeff Masemola was one of the senior leaders of the ANC. The impression I got was that he was a very solid and brilliant intellectual who did not talk too much, who had a commanding sense of presence; just like the qualities of more mature and well-groomed leaders of the calibre of Cde Jeff Radebe.

Also, in F-Section was Cde Mandla Mthembu, who once trended in the social media for his romantic association with the celebrity Khanyi Mbau and the public display of his wealth and richness in the form of Lamborghinis. I remember while I was in F-Section, we used to be among the heavy smokers with 'Mindlos' as I used to call him. As a result, we would smoke BB when our ration of cigarettes was finished. In prison as the ANC, we used to have a collective pool of some commodities

that we called *kolgos*, (a Russian term), with each comrade contributing things such as a pack of cigarettes, tinned food, shampoo as a washing soap, biscuits, Aromat, toothpaste, Nivea, etc with one Comrade in charge of such items. These were all basic items which, under normal circumstances, one would just take for granted.

In a way, the ANC was inculcating in the minds of the comrades, a spirit of collectivism and discipline. If your pack of cigarettes was finished, you had to patiently wait until the cycle of distribution started again. Otherwise, you would have to smoke BB Best Blend (*Imboza*), which was not as enjoyable as your Stuyvesant or Rothmans. Succinctly put, we were supposed to subordinate our own personal interests to those of the collective. That was the kind of life we used to live on Robben Island; a life that was characterised by genuine comradeship, devoid of materialism and selfishness. The ANC achieved a pinnacle of strength and coherence, politically and organisationally, while based in Robben Island Prison.

D-Section was, at the time, occupied by the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) cadres of SWAPO, including Comrade Toivo Ja Toivo, one of the most senior members of its leadership. They were later repatriated. (Namibia was a 'colony' of South Africa at the time). On Robben Island each section was made up of four cells, each cell accommodating 18 inmates with vertical double-decker beds (scuffles) sleeping two inmates each. D-Section, at the time, had two of its four cells occupied by 36 SWAPO comrades. Two of the four cells in E-Section accommodated almost the same number. F and G-Sections were the only sections where all four cells were occupied to full capacity of 72 inmates. B-Section, where our leadership was incarcerated, had not more than 30 comrades. Hospital Section combined with the kitchen staff, had personnel of almost 30. The ten-celled C-Section (*Kulukuthu*), where one was locked on arrival, had no long-term inmates, except on one occasion, when an inmate was once punished by being locked up there. At the time of my incarceration, Robben Island Prison had a total of almost 271 inmates; in military terms we constituted almost a battalion.

This is testimony to Lenin's observation that 'Revolutionaries are very few in the society'; especially when I take into cognisance the personnel strength of the camps that I resided in while I was in Angola from 1978 to 1982 before infiltrating the country. For instance, in 1979 I was in Funda camp in the Cartito area of Angola which was meant to be a front area

for the comrades who were supposed to be deployed inside the country for military operations and those who were doing crash courses. We were almost a platoon at approximately 40 guerrilla combatants in the camp who were waiting to be deployed inside the country.

That is why I do understand that it was quite a bold step and a sacrifice to join the guerrilla warfare part of the struggle during the apartheid era because death was always imminent. This is something that seems to be taken for granted by many people under the current circumstances, when it is time to reap the fruits of the freedom that was achieved because of the blood and sweat of those few of us who were there when very few dared to be there. That is why '*ek is gatvol*' for being marginalised and reduced to the level of an onlooker, while people are enjoying freedom because of my blood, sweat and sacrifices.

To reach G-Section, you had to have served about five years of your sentence, gravitating, in terms of the category of privileges, while navigating different sections, from D-Group, B-Group to A-Group. A-Group was made up of inmates who were incarcerated in B and G-Section. Privileges included access to newspapers and magazines, contact visits and several letters that one was allowed to write and receive per year, as well as an opportunity to do a trade such as bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry, upholstery, painting and tailoring. I was doing tailoring, sewing uniforms for inmates. When you happened to reach G-Section, you immediately became aware that you were in a most privileged section and no longer had to get news through *Impukane*, which was limited. *Impukane* (fly) was a term we used to describe news articles that were transcribed in a notepad from newspapers for those comrades of D, E and F-Sections who were not allowed to buy newspapers.

Throughout the different sections, we were able to listen to the radio via the prison intercom. Once in G-Section, we were allowed to buy and own small radios. I had one for myself and used to like to listen to Trevor Shabalala and Shado Twala on Radio Metro. During my frequent sleepless nights, I would tune in to Trevor Tshabalala's Shell Road Truckers at midnight. I found it emotionally empowering to hear the British motivational speaker, Reggie Barrett. I generally enjoy listening to motivational speakers because their way with words, and gift of lifting spirits, enables one to adopt progressive and positive perspectives. Elsewhere in this volume, I engage with the 'positive mental attitude' about which he used to speak quite often.

In G-Section we had opportunities to read the different newspapers to which the prison subscribed, such as the *Cape Times*, *Mercury*, *Star*, *Citizen*, *New Nation* and *Sunday Times*. The *Financial Mail* was preferred by those pursuing academic studies that were Commerce orientated. I never liked to read it because of its technical nature. We were also given an opportunity to choose a trade one intended to learn. After completing the specified period of learning there were exams, after which inmates would receive certificates. Added to that, when you got a visit, you no longer had to talk to your visitor through a glass partition with a telephone, which was one of the most interesting things to me. The atmosphere was totally different from other sections, with more sporting facilities and kit than other sections. On weekends when we played soccer, we used to be better equipped than the average township soccer team.

Information to a Robben Island Prisoner, was very precious. On Robben Island those comrades in D-Section, occupied by South Africans (after SWAPO comrades had already been repatriated back to Namibia), did not have access to newspapers due to their group category in terms of the so-called privileges. E-Section and F-Section used to get a transcribed version on notepad pages that could easily fit the palm of one's hand and could be sneaked into those sections. I was made to believe that, before I arrived on the Island, comrades who belonged to A-Group used to be allowed to go and clean around the suburbs where warders and their families lived. It was said the only thing they used to steal from those houses were newspapers; a reality that was once apparently even acknowledged by the warders.

That practice was stopped and subsequently the only people who ended up cleaning the suburb were prisoners from the medium prison which that was also on Robben Island. They might have realised that we were going to end up winning the hearts and minds of their families because we were going to politicise them. Historically speaking, my perception was that the white South African community was never allowed to be involved in politics beyond the constraints of the political parties representing white voters in the whites-only parliament. The National Party kept them in the dark and in ignorance about the untold misery, degradation, and dehumanisation of the Black African communities. Instead, they bombarded them with obscene privileges at the expense of the toil, blood and sweat of the Black African people. Even under current circumstances, political naïvety and ignorance makes it

difficult for some of them to understand our anger and frustration about the horrors that were committed under the apartheid regime.

Another dimension of the G-Section community was that it included some of the stalwarts and elder comrades of the movement, such as comrade of the Luthuli Detachment of the 1960s, some of whom were involved in the skirmishes at Wankie in Zimbabwe 1967, with the likes of Cde Chris Hani. Here I am talking about older men, including uTatu Meyiwa, uTatu Phala, uTatu Gizenka, uTatu Ngqondela, uTatu Mdlalose, uTatu Dlamini, uTatu Hina, uTatu Tyutyu, the late uTatu Raymond 'Marhubulus' (we used to call him 'Bra Ray'); uTatu Lengisi (who was once a Brigadier General in the SANDF and was my boss in Defence Intelligence) and others I may have forgotten. Remember that it is our culture to prefix the names of those who are older than us as a sign of respect like uTatu so and so or uSisi so and so. Former Honourable President of the RSA Cde Kgalema Motlanthe, and former Minister of Energy Cde Jeff Radebe who were also in G-Section but did not fall into the category of old men (ooTata). To use a township lingo, they were in the category of '*grootman*' like Bra Kgalema or Bra Jeff. Even Jeff Masemola, a stalwart of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was in the category of *grootman*, Bra Jeff.

The comrades of my generation included current Minister of Police Cde Bheki Cele, former Deputy Minister of Finance Sfiso Buthelezi, late Minister of Performance and Evaluation Cde Collins 'Animal' Chabane, former MEC of Health in KwaZulu-Natal Cde (Doctor) Sbongiseni Dlomo (currently a member of the National Assembly), former Lieutenant General Surgeon General of SAMHS of the SANDF Cde (Doctor) Vijay Ramlakan, Member of Parliament and Police Portfolio Committee Cde Jerome Maake, the late Cde Peter Mokaba, former spokesperson of President Cyril Ramaphosa, the late Cde Ronnie Mamoepa, Adviser to former President Cde Thabo Mbeki, Cde Moses Ngoasheng, former Mayor of Ekukrululeni Cde Dumisani Makhaye, Cde Ken 'DJ' Mphahlwa, former Mayor of Port Elizabeth Cde Giraffe my home boy, Cde Mindlos, and others I may have forgotten.

From the high-profile nature of the positions the above-mentioned comrades currently occupy in our society, it is a clear indication that indeed the ANC succeeded in converting Robben Island Prison into a terrain of the struggle namely, a revolutionary college to produce a politically and revolutionary seasoned ANC cadre. I dare say that there is not even one of the comrades I have mentioned, when they first

arrived on Robben Island, predicted that they would be where they are today under the current Democratic Dispensation. I can say with confidence that their political maturity was attributable to the political education that was consistently and intensively carried out in Robben Island Prison under the auspices of the leadership (Rivonia trialists) who were based in B-Section.

More than anyone else, they are the ones who are compelled and supposed to do all they can to ensure that the ANC remains unified and does not deviate from its historic mission, principles, and objectives of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). Furthermore, they must be vigilant and ensure that it is not hijacked by the forces of reaction and counter-revolution, lest history judge them very harshly. In a very sophisticated and subtle manner, the ANC is subjected to a barrage of right-wing fire, requiring resilience to defend the gains of the Revolution.

In G-Section I was nicknamed ‘*Khazi*’ by the elder comrades; (the English version of *khazi* is cousin). You cannot be given that nickname if you do not behave in a disciplined and respectable manner. When I returned from my traditional initiation, one of the elder comrades who had been in G-Section, testified to that when addressing the community and speaking about my conduct on Robben Island. For me discipline, if it is to be genuine, must come from within, it must be intrinsic. We called this ‘conscious discipline’ in the Angolan bush, as opposed to the mechanical discipline exhibited designed to impress watching authorities or commanders. My other nickname was ‘Alexei’, given by Cde Themba Nkosi ‘TP’, also a G-Section inmate.<sup>37</sup> Alexei was a huge Russian heavyweight champ in weightlifting at the time, who won a Gold Medal during the Olympic Games in 1980. Of course, I am genetically big and it has always been a problem not to expand beyond the reasonable boundaries of my fighting weight (obesity). In G-Section I had an opportunity to hobnob with heavyweights of the Movement and was surrounded by experience and wisdom. That for me, is among the things I will always cherish *ad infinitum*.

I resumed my formal academic studies when I arrived on Robben Island, starting at Standard 9 (Junior Certificate or JC) progressing through to Standard 10 (Matric). At that level I deliberately took three subjects out of six per year; so that I could leave room for my own political and ideological education. My formal academic studies at that level were very boring and I wished I could just pursue a university degree like my comrades were doing. The main problem is that the moment you

grasp, internalise and appreciate the scientific nature and objectivity of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, it becomes quite easy to discover the weaknesses and superficiality of bourgeois education. Perhaps that was an indictment of the type and quality of the education that was provided to Black African pupils. It was an education system that basically taught Black African people to be 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' rather than to be intellectual critics and be self-sufficient. Elsewhere I quoted Lenin, when he once said, among other things, (let me paraphrase him) that, a genuine and real education of the oppressed and exploited masses cannot be separated from a Revolutionary Struggle, for it is the one that enables them to even realise the magnitude of their power and empowers them to forge ahead with the struggle to liberate themselves.

We were studying by correspondence, through what was then referred to as a the Department of Education and Training (DET); previously called the Department of Bantu Education. This was during the time when part of our country was divided into four homelands namely, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei (TBVC). 'Divide and Rule' had always been the strategy of the racist apartheid regime, to ensure that black people lived in their tribal cocoons, with no possibility of them uniting against the oppression. At that time, a passport was required to travel between these homelands, each with its own consulate. Tribalism is still alive and rife and, at times, manifests itself strongly in the political and working environment.

We have two forms of education, namely, the formal and the informal, both having their own advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages of the informal is mainly that you do not have a certificate to show, especially when you are looking for employment even though you have a wealth of knowledge and experience that could be of benefit to your employer. Former Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the SABC Mr Hlaudi Motsoeneng was once asked about his Matric Certificate, even though he had been on the job as a COO for some time. It is within that context that once they took over, the ANC established a Deployment Committee, to ensure that those comrades who were not certificated, but who were well capacitated intellectually to lead certain government departments, were employed in such departments.

The advantage of informal education is that it is not constrained by conformism that is normally geared towards the indoctrination of people not to question and be critical, but to follow a set of beliefs that are meant to sustain the *status quo*. In the final analysis, formal education perpetuates



a particular ideological hegemony and is therefore subjective and totally devoid of scientific objectivity. Because of that, people, including academics and intellectuals, are in a way compelled to function and think within the parameters of the bourgeois/capitalist ideology. Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd, the architect of the apartheid system, crafted Bantu Education as a means of suppressing the intellectual development of Black Africans such that they were restricted to unskilled labouring careers.

At one point whilst in Robben Island Prison, the authorities allowed pastors to come on Sundays to deliver religious sermons. A limited number of us, including me, would attend, and for me it was a question of being away from the confinement of the cell and maybe, by luck, seeing other comrades on the corridors. We even nicknamed one of the pastors 'Boesak' because of his interesting sermons and his endeavour to try to be relevant and boost our morale.

On Robben Island, as ANC members, we subscribed to Marxist-Leninist doctrine and collectively acknowledged the importance of a Revolutionary Movement possessing a Scientific Revolutionary Theory during the execution of the Struggle, not as a tool for mere academic discourse but as a practical guide to revolutionary action. I am surprised by the lack of even a mere mention of the doctrine within the Mass Democratic Movement that is supposed to inform some of their strategic decisions. Within the realm of the Marxist-Leninist tradition, we had, among other things, always discussed extensively philosophical issues including the basic question of philosophy namely, 'What is the primary matter or consciousness?'; a basic question that divided, during Medieval times, philosophy into two main camps namely, Materialism and Idealism.

Furthermore, we used to delve into the dynamics of the relationship between the objective and subjective factors, social being and social consciousness, ideas and reality, Super Structure (Social Institutions) and the Economic Base, Relations of Production, and the Productive Forces. '*Cogito Ergo Sum*' – I think, and therefore exist, or I exist and therefore think (Descartes). Called, described, and interpreted in a variety of ways but essentially dealing with the entire reality that can be summarised into only three phenomena namely, nature, society and thought.

These, according to the Marxist-Leninist perspective, are three qualitatively different yet organically related creations and constituents of the one historical process. Nature is the primary product of material evolution; society developed out of nature and consciousness out of

society. All subjects and disciplines at all educational levels are basically endeavouring to grapple and understand those three complex, dynamic and ever-changing aspects of reality. Nothing in the universe exists outside the above-mentioned phenomena. Even the very existence of God the Almighty is within the realm of the three, which brings me to what Lenin once said that 'it is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence; it is on the contrary, their social existence which determines their consciousness.'

Based on the political and ideological maturity of the comrades on Robben Island; it came as no surprise that during the 1980s, comrades from the UDF/MDM used to send requests to the Island, seeking assistance about certain issues of political and strategic significance. The issue would be distributed to all the sections for discussion, and then transferred to the senior comrades in B-Section for their collective wisdom and finalisation. As the ANC inmates on the Island, we always held the senior comrades in B-Section in very high esteem. In theory and practice, they were the epitome of revolutionary ethics, discipline, and morality of the Movement and very consistent in their resolve. For me personally they were my father figures.

Revolutionaries are by nature atheists; for they are direct products of struggle and revolutionary practice. They therefore perceive the world from a dialectical and materialist perspective, historically mandated to always focus not on matters of abstract spirituality, but on matters of practicality. They have an inherent intellectual inclination to steer clear of the abstract religious articulations that do not provide solutions to the practical problems faced by the downtrodden poorest of the poor. That is why all of them are as a matter of philosophical principle, in full agreement with what Marx once proclaimed about religion that, 'Religious suffering is, at one and the same time the expression of real suffering, and a protest against a real suffering. Religion is a sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is opium of the people.'<sup>38</sup>

Karl Marx further said that, 'Atheism reminds one of children, assuring everyone who is ready to listen to them that they are not afraid of the bogeyman.' Fortunately, there is evidence for everyone to see how the so-called 'men of God' exploit gullible poor worshippers in the name of religion while they are living in obscene opulence, coupled by an absurd and ridiculous display of conspicuous consumption, while the followers are living under conditions of uninhabitable squalor and degradation.

The attendance of political classes and discussions were compulsory for all the members of the ANC, including comrades who were from COSAS or the UDF. A former UDF leader ‘Terror’ Lekota, currently a leader of the Congress of the People (COPE), comes to mind. In the morning we would hold news analysis of issues we regarded as topical before the warders opened the grill. In the afternoon after the last lockup, we would continue with the political syllabus, after which everyone would be allowed to engage with his academic studies. During the academic studies, a comrade who was in charge of the cell would request all inmates to maintain complete silence so we could each focus on our different academic disciplines. Even the laziest readers would feel compelled to read something amongst the vast, available resources. We used to transcribe material recommended by the leadership from books that various comrades were using for their degree studies. Books rotated daily, bed by bed, in each cell. A cell was made up of 18 to 20 inmates sleeping on a scuffle. In a way, we were tracking Marx’s Scientific Dialectical Materialism by ‘discovering a rational shell within the mystical kernel’.

While I slogged through my matric studies, fellow G-Section inmate Cde Patrick Mogale, former principal of a school in Mpumalanga, was doing postgraduate studies in pedagogics. To relieve my boredom, I often read his material to stimulate my passion for education as an ideological weapon. He used to request me to assist him. Coincidentally, after release from prison, a friend who was doing a BA degree in Education at Vista University in Port Elizabeth, asked me to help her and her colleagues in their preparation for exams, after they realised that I had some knowledge on the subject. Judging from the feedback, they were quite satisfied with my assistance.

During our political classes and discussions, emotive and volatile arguments would arise. Inmates with musical instruments would go to the bathroom and practise. The bathroom acoustics helped drown out the arguments. Comrades tended to divide into factions. The ‘Narrow Nationalists’ with anti-communist sentiments, and the Communists who over-emphasised the class character of the struggle. Both sides used to provide very convincing arguments in their defence. I have always maintained that any form of struggle against colonialism, even our own special type of colonialism, had to be led by nationalists. You must be a good nationalist before you can become a good internationalist, because as they say, ‘charity begins at home.’ That is why our Communist Party adopted the goals and objectives of the NDR as their minimum

programme, with the ANC leading the alliance. The omnibus and multi-class character of the ANC enabled it to mobilise all social strata but made it vulnerable to capture, and co-option by the bourgeois. It is a 'free-for-all' scenario.

E-Section was very popular for its daily robust political discussions, to the extent that the late Cde Ronnie Mamoepa, later an adviser to President Cyril Ramaphosa, and Cde Moses Ngoasheng, adviser to President Thabo Mbeki, used to sneak into our section from G-Section, during the lunchtime lockup just to attend our lively discussions. Perhaps the discussions (*Umrabulo*) of E-Section contributed to their accession to such high positions of responsibility. Fortunately, the comrades performed their respective tasks impressively well.

E-Section was made up of mostly young people and was the first section in which a prisoner was placed before moving to other sections, depending on length of sentence. I was sentenced for 17 years and would have been able to navigate most sections. In prison lingo, '*ek was 'n blou baadjie.*' E-Section inmates included comrades Peter Mokaba, Collins 'Animal' Chabane, Jerome Maake, Naphtali Manana, Johannes Shabangu, David Moise, Oupa Mashigo and Bobby Tsotsobe. What was very strange was that no one questioned or knew what other comrades had done to be sentenced and incarcerated. For instance, despite the fact that we were in the same cell in E-Section for years, I did not know why some of the above-mentioned comrades were sentenced to death, until I heard at the funeral of Cde Frelimo in 2019, the current Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans Cde Thabang Makwetla mentioning in passing during his address, that Cde Naphtali Manana was one of those responsible for an attack on a certain police station during the struggle.

Former Minister of Energy, Cde Jeff Radebe, who was based in G-Section, used to tutor me almost on a daily basis on Mercantile Law when I was preparing for matric exams. I did not know why he got imprisoned. I am quite certain that many comrades will only determine the reason for my incarceration, when they read this book. I will also expect them to give me their full comradely support regarding this project. They will discover that instead of being well-placed since the advent of democracy, I am unhappy for the reasons I have already extensively elaborated on.

There were also Comrades in the E-Section who were from Cape Town who were referred to as the 'Oscar Mpetha group of 12' because

they were collectively sentenced in the Supreme Court of Cape Town under the Terrorism Act. At the time of his arrest, Cde Oscar Mpetha was one of the most respected trade union stalwarts of our movement. Also in the section was Joe Hloloe, former Media Ombudsman, a reputable veteran journalist and senior member of the PAC, who used to relate stories about when he used to work as a journalist with the likes of Can Thembas. 'Bra Joe' as we used to call him, was in the same group as mine while we were in Leeukop Prison, waiting to be ferried to Robben Island.

The issue of education on Robben Island, both politically and academically, was emphasised and coordinated by our ANC leadership who were based in B-Section. They collectively authored a remarkably interesting and educative manuscript entitled, 'Man and his Country', comprising a detailed analysis of capitalism and apartheid with reference to colonialism of a special type. The latter appellation differentiated the classical form from that in South Africa, where the 'colonisers' and the 'colonised' were not remote from one another but within the same borders.

When you arrived on Robben Island, the first question you were asked was, are you or have you registered for your studies? If not, you would be assisted to register with funds organised and made available to you. All the ANC comrades who came to Robben Island had to start with 'Man and his Country' before venturing into other theoretical and ideological intellectual gymnastics. Our training included exposure to a variety of trades such as painting, carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, upholstery, and tailoring. We attend the trade-related classes almost daily outside the cells. However, to qualify for trade classes, one had to be in the category of A-Group in terms of privileges and to belong to G-Section. At the end of the term, inmates were tested and received certificates.

I hope and pray that the political and ideological conscience of comrades, especially those in senior positions, will remain focused on the main historical task at hand, which is a total political and economic liberation of the oppressed masses of our country. The masses on the ground are dependent on their authentic leadership. After the recent election, our people have demonstrated that they still love the ANC by renewing its mandate, but that must not be regarded as an unconditional mandate. Never in my wildest dreams, had I thought that the large-scale looting, fraud, and corruption within our ranks for the desperate pursuit of money and richness, could reach the current sickening level

of absurdity and obscenity. The Chinese Communist Party once said that if a comrade is found to be corrupt, he or she must be arrested and be thrown into jail.

One thing I wish to reiterate that I never do as a matter of principle, is to abandon the Movement. I believe that the ANC is the only organisation that is historically tasked to lead this society to its fully fledged political and economic emancipation. Let those who are intent on gatekeeping and side-lining other comrades, stop those reactionary tendencies, because they do not do any good for the organisation. It is usually said that individuals come and go, but it seems that at times, they go, leaving considerable and incalculable damage behind.

It is quite fortunate that Robben Island Prison was not just an ordinary prison but was constituted to be a revolutionary college where a cadre with a new form of revolutionary consciousness was being deliberately moulded. The ANC had a coherent and progressive political/revolutionary syllabus that used to be taught from the beginning to the end of the year, encompassing a study of Politics both on a national and international level with particular focus on the national level and on the rise of Afrikaner capital and the so-called resolution of the 'Poor White problem.' That was particularly important because, as a revolutionary activist, you must know your enemy perhaps better than the enemy knows itself. The syllabus also included the political history of our own struggle, with reference to the history of our own movement, since it was the first to assume a national character in 1912 in the country.

The issue of the resolution of the Poor White problem at the time, under the Nationalist Party rule, meant that certain structural measures were established to ensure that the white Afrikaner standard of living was enhanced. Legislation was enacted to facilitate that process. The Job Reservation Act stipulated that no white Afrikaner should be involved in manual labour, like digging and using a shovel in the workplace; that was the job of a Black African man. As a result, even the most illiterate or intellectually stunted Afrikaner used to assume the position of a supervisor of a Black African man in the work environment. The cheap labour of a black domestic worker or garden 'boy' was always there in their own homes, to ensure that everything manual in the household was taken care of. White South Africans cried foul when the democratic government under the ANC enacted measures like Affirmative Action and Labour Equity to deal with the historical imbalances by enhancing the standard of living of all blacks and levelling the playing field.

On Robben Island there was a consistent, sustained, and deliberate effort to ensure that comrades had a deep understanding of our own revolutionary struggle in terms of the relationship of our NDR with other revolutionary movements and progressive forces of the world, with the omnipotent Marxist-Leninist perspective as a guiding analytical tool, coupled with a dialectical stethoscope for political and ideological diagnosis.

I deliberately refer to it as 'omnipotent' because Marxist-Leninist world outlook/Philosophy, studies in an incredibly detailed, objective, and scientific way, almost all aspects of reality namely, nature, society and thought. Those aspects are comprehensively, in a well-integrated way, embodied in the three components of Marxism-Leninism i.e. Historical Materialism, Political Economy and Dialectical Materialism. It is specifically for this reason that bourgeois ideologists, professors, academics, and intellectuals admire the teachings, though not openly. They only admire and utilise certain aspects for their academic relevance, and in most cases, in a distorted version; dismissively referring to it as a Communist ideology.

There is a tendency for bourgeois apologists and intellectuals to dismiss Marxism-Leninism as just a Communist ideology, that has no relevance under the current circumstances. I wonder what is 'Communist and dismissible' about the scientific explanation in its Political Economy and *Das Capital* of the necessary labour time and surplus labour time, and the exploitative function of the latter during the production process leaving a worker with a slave wage? A capitalist production process that is based on a dehumanising labour alienation that reduces a worker into a mere appendage of the machine; turning his labour power into a mere commodity to be easily discarded at any time, when it is no longer generating profit. Is it a crime or an offence for the classics to make people aware of their own socioeconomic and material conditions of their existence, that subject them to live under conditions of degradation, abject poverty, and squalor in the name of free market economy that is characterised by selfishness, egoism, and the endless pursuit of the maximisation of profit at the expense of the poor working masses?

The ideological and social conditioning of people results in false consciousness. Most people in the system thus accept their socioeconomic conditions as given. We are even told that the wretched conditions of oppression have been created in the image of God, and therefore we

must do nothing about it. If the masses of the oppressed and exploited rise against the system, they are accused of being 'heathen' who will not go to heaven but will rot in hell in the afterlife. They are compelled to remain in an 'imaginary sphere of not-yet being' while their actual being is abused, exploited, and emasculated for the benefit of the few greedy individuals. Practically speaking, heaven and hell exist here on earth alongside each other. Think of Sandton alongside Alexandra, where the living standards are polar opposites.

It has become normal to hear in the news that a certain mine intends to discard 3 000 jobs, or a certain factory is retrenching 4 000 workers, just like that. Imagine how many families are going to be affected by the sudden unplanned retrenchment, an occurrence that has become prevalent in our country. Now it is suddenly an offence for Marxism-Leninism to delve deeper and to open the eyes of people about the horrors and the destructive nature of the economic system. The critique and exposure of the ills of the capitalist economic system and its corrosive effects on humanity, and the need to transform the system makes it unpopular in Humanities departments of bourgeois universities. As Marx said: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point is to change it.'<sup>39</sup> The political scientists that we daily hear analysing the political situation should be focussing on the eradication of poverty and unemployment. But I have realised that their analysis is constricted by bourgeois ideological parameters. They are in a way not expected to be too critical of a capitalist mode of production within which they are functioning. They are bound to toe the line of the predominant ideological hegemony.

In Robben Island Prison, inmates who belonged to G-Section that was made up of those in category A in terms of privileges, were required to go out to do their respective trades (*Isipani*) outside the prison. Although it was not compulsory, most of us preferred to attend those trade-related classes. And while out there, away from the confinement of the cell, we used to have an opportunity to snare crayfish and *mbazas* and cook them along the shores. That was only possible if you reached G-Section and you were in A-Group in terms of privileges. I even learnt how to cook crayfish. It is placed in water while still alive, then boiled until its noise, kicking and jumping is silenced. Then it is ready to be eaten. Only in G-Section and A-Group was this kind of movement permitted. A group of our bricklayers once built a big and solid building that was to replace an old one for visiting. For me as a tailor I never ran



short of a uniform tailored to suit me. As time went on, we developed a rapport with the warders. They began to realise that we were not just ordinary prisoners, but prisoners of conscience, and not as bad as we were portrayed by their masters in Pretoria.

It used to happen that, by virtue of the length of the sentence a person was serving, some prisoners did not go beyond E-Section but got released while still in E-Section. We used to joke that if one were serving a long-term sentence, one must avoid befriending a person who was doing a short term, because you would be stressed when he got released. Indeed that used to happen. For those of us who were from the bush, it used to be quite interesting to hear, in general, from those comrades inside the country. Apart from comradeship there were friendships. That meant you could be on Robben Island in one section without knowing the person who was in E-Section until that person was released. The prison authorities strictly adhered to their favourite policy of divide and rule and, as a result, inmates from different sections were not allowed to mix.

Senior comrades from B-Section were not allowed to engage in trades, let alone interact with other inmates, even though they were in the category of A-Group in terms of privileges. In fact, I had a sense that the leadership in B-Section had an aura when it came to their relationship with the prison authorities. For me, it was the aura they had always commanded during the 1960s when they were initially sentenced as Rivonia trialists to be sent to Robben Island. When I arrived on the Island in 1983 it was still there; prison authorities were basically intimidated by them. Perhaps owing, among other things, to the dignified way the senior comrades always carried themselves. At first, sectional interaction on Robben Island was strictly prohibited but after a sustained pressure from inmates, it was later permitted to a limited extent. Subsequently, we were allowed to play sport with F-Section, which was next to G-Section. Every year end, it was a matter of tradition, that we held 'summer games' where different 'houses' would be created for different sporting codes and indoor games for competition.

The games would culminate into musical performances in the hall by the bands we formed. My Afro-Jazz band was constituted by me on alto saxophone (e-flat instrument), the late Honourable Minister Cde Collin 'Animal' Chabane on flugel horn (b-flat instrument), Cde Norman Yengeni on lead guitar (recently retired as a Lt General and Chief of Human Resources in the SANDF), Cde Jacob Molefe playing tenor

saxophone (b-flat instrument) (currently working in the South African State Security), Cde Chris on drums and Cde Curtis on bass guitar (I do not know where the latter two cadres are working currently). Cde James Mange, an exceptionally good composer, had his own band that used to play strictly Rastafarian-orientated music. His song was once played as a soundtrack in one of the TV dramas.

Other comrades who were involved in music were Cde Naphtali Manana playing clarinet (b-flat instrument), Cde David Moise also playing alto saxophone (e-flat instrument), the late Cde Madondo 'Skiki' on soprano saxophone (b-flat instrument), the late Cde Tom London playing trumpet (b-flat instrument), Cde Chafful and Cde Ronnie Mabhena on vocals, both of whom were exceptionally good when it comes to composing. Still others were playing classical music with string guitars based on staff notation.

We also had collaborations assembling different musicians to make a big, well-harmonised brass band. The occasion of the 'summer games', particularly musical performances, were quite serious entertainment. The solidity and maturity of our music and performances were due to us mostly using staff notation, which means we were able to read music. I passed Grade 6 in music through correspondence with UNISA, which enabled me to read staff notation; starting with a musical book entitled *Tune a Day*.

In G-Section, during the lunch time, we were allowed to go out for exercises, to walk around the grounds; a large area that was meant for soccer and rugby. If you requested a comrade to take a walk with you, one would say 'let's take a taxi'. Taking a taxi with a comrade meant that you would walk around the grounds as long a distance as possible, whether you were two or more, mostly discussing political issues that we previously discussed while in the cell – issues that at times were very emotive and required that a particular position had to be adopted, a lobbying type of a situation. Indeed, sometimes arguments would arise and could become very tense and emotionally charged, to the point of dividing us into factions as I have alluded elsewhere.

Apart from playing an alto saxophone, I was also a choirmaster with a repertoire of many good, relevant songs that we used to sing while we were in the bush in Angola; the songs that were composed by the late Cde Senzo, a well-known brilliant, prolific composer of choral music while in exile. Many of them were also recorded in our broadcasting station Radio Freedom in Luanda, with some songs conducted during the recording by

Cde O.R. himself. As one of his choristers in the choir that recorded in Luanda around 1978, I even had the impression that Cde O.R. was once a teacher. In Robben Island we would spend the whole year composing and practising, and compose on our horns in preparation for the summer games as well as for our own self-development as musicians. Our senior comrades from B-Section once requested, through the authorities, that my choir perform for them in B-Section. It seems to be senior and more mature people who love choral music. It was quite an honour for me to perform with my choir for our elder comrades. We used the volleyball ground that was next to their single cells, that they also used for exercise, as a stage for this performance.

Indeed, the battle for me personally was over, but the war, the struggle in general, continued as per historic necessity occasioned by the socioeconomic and political conditions of the existence of a Black African person in South Africa. I knew there was a build-up in the bush in Angola, where I left comrades who were committed and prepared to pick up the spear and continue to engage the oppressive system of apartheid to the last drop of their blood and that the special operations machinery would expand beyond us, those who either perished during the battles or got captured.

Mr F.W. de Klerk, a leader of the National Party at the time once correctly said in parliament, when addressing his white constituency in 1990, 'There is no minority that can cling to power for ever without facing the possibilities of a revolutionary blood bath.' This was said after executing a bloodless coup d'état with his gang including Malan and Pik Botha against the super racist P.W. Botha ('*Groot Krokodil*') who was suffering from politically related cognitive dissonance and senility. This precipitated De Klerk's reformist project, the unbanning of banned organisations, the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles.

A fully accurate prediction indeed, as though it had been uttered by a left-wing political analyst. I left committed and dedicated MK combatants who were ready and prepared to engage the obstinate and brutal state machinery of the dehumanising system of apartheid even at the supreme cost, to ensure that it was completely obliterated from the face of the earth. Apartheid was declared by the United Nations as a crime against humanity as far back as 1973. Ultimately, the dignity of this country was restored after hundreds of years of brutal subjugation.

It bothers me that when colonisers conquered our land; they also destroyed our heritage and symbols. It was their *modus operandi* to

destroy any trace of the cultural identity of the colonised and impose their norms and cultural values. Hence the colonised ended up adopting the language of the coloniser, as happened in the countries colonised by Britain, France and Portugal, which became Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone respectively. In South Africa, attempts to impose the additional layer of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction sparked the 16 June 1976 uprising. Our history seems to 'coincide' with their arrival in 1652, as though we did not have cultural life before that.

# The consequences

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Among the traits I admire most in human nature is the ability to adapt to situations however hard, painful, and awkward they may be. At this stage of my life, I am beginning to learn and realise, that when one is faced with such horrible and shocking situations at a young age as I was; the psychological impact does not seem so devastating or paralysing at that time. However, as I age and mature, and attempt to make sense of the past, I feel the impact in the form of reminiscences and vivid intrusive images and flashbacks. That is when it hurts. For me, it is coupled with periodic involuntary uncontrollable sobbing and shedding of tears. At that moment, of what I will call an abrupt attack, you do not need anyone to feel pity for you or provide any consolation. That is why I always keep my 'shades' ready for use in case of an attack, that can occur anytime, anywhere, even in a public space like a taxi. In some instances, it can be sparked by a simple thing like melancholic music. During that moment, all you need is to be left alone, to shed those tears and externalise the hurt, so that the process can take its natural course. That is how my post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) manifests itself sometimes.

To be very honest, it is a very disheartening and awkward situation because no one knows what you are going through, except you alone. Even if you are in the presence of a psychiatrist for consultation, as happened to me some time ago; he can only allow you to externalise your hurt and cry yourself out, but the reality is that no one can delete the images that are stuck and ingrained in your mind. In the final analysis, I think you are the only person who can help yourself. Even my own children know that their Dad cries from time to time, for reasons they are still going to discover as they grow and get to know their South

African history, especially that of their father in the revolutionary struggle. For them, the issue of my sobbing is no big problem at all, and I regard that as a blessing in disguise, because I do not want them to regard me as so macho that I lack the capacity to shed tears.

By the way, some time ago, Mathabo and I laughed when our youngest daughter Nkcubeko (aged ten years at the time) asked me where I was born. When I told her I was born in Port Elizabeth, she responded, 'Oh I thought you were born in Angola.' As parents we should sit our children down and tell them where we came from and how we grew up. What I am now saying seems to be easy, but it is a very difficult thing to do, because most Black Africans are from dysfunctional and broken backgrounds that were as a consequence of the rotten socioeconomic and political system of apartheid.

When I listen to the melancholic hymns that are usually sung at funerals; especially from my original Church (Methodist), I sometimes just cannot help but shed tears and become embarrassed, at times pleading and begging myself to please settle down, mostly without success. The most awkward and embarrassing part, is that you sob with the involuntary, convulsive physical gasps that can easily be picked up by the person next to you, even if I have put on my sunglasses that are always ready for such occasions. I so wish I could meet people who have a similar condition, so that I can ask how they cope in such situations. But I doubt that I will find one, because I think traumatic experiences are assimilated and manifested by each person in a unique way.

Some time ago, I snapped where I am currently still working, in front of my bosses at the time Brigadier General Smit (Ret.) and Lieutenant Colonel de Waal (Ret.). They were giving me a final warning with the intention of charging me for being 'always late at work.' While I was being addressed by them, there was an accumulation of anger in me, because I thought that they were just after me for prejudicial reasons. In front of them, I suddenly snapped and started crying hysterically, as though I was in a trance, swearing (fortunately in my Xhosa language which they did not understand), telling them to assist me to exit the system; also saying I cannot fight to liberate this country and be oppressed again and that I will not let it lie down. It was unbelievably bad, and it was as though I was not listening to myself.

Coincidentally, that incident occurred shortly after a certain person, whose name was Mdubasi (I do not remember his rank) shot and killed about six white members who were working in the Human Resources

section, in Tempe Military Base in Bloemfontein. Apparently, his salary had been stopped while he was away in the Eastern Cape to bury his close relative. In hindsight, the problem with that uncontrollable emotional state, is that you might do something that you will regret. Because of that, I have taught myself, under all circumstances, to try to subordinate my emotions to the rational part of my brain.

Fortunately, Brigadier General Smit seemed to have understood the dynamics of PTSD because of her background in Social Work. She just said that my behaviour was a manifestation of PTSD, and immediately organised a counsellor for me. Ironically, after that incident, they gave me a post that was challenging and interesting; I also attended a developmental course on facilitation. That post preceded my current post, which is similarly challenging. Instead of arriving late and knocking off earlier, I now arrive at work early and knock off late. They were correct that I used to be a serial latecomer at work; but the thing is that I did not have a post at the time and was one of those who were referred to as supernumerary, a Human Resources term that means you have no post. As a result, I used to get to the office, read newspapers and go home on a daily basis for years.

Major General Sejake (Ret.), when he was a Chief Director, announced that a group of us was supposed to leave Defence Intelligence and 'go back to the units' as though we had once been in units. Yet, since I integrated in 1994, I have been a functionary of the South African Military Intelligence Services. In 1993, I attended a Military Intelligence course in Harare at the Kabrit School of Military Intelligence. As the whole division gathered for the announcement, Cde Sejake said he was the bearer of bad news. I was so shocked when he behaved as though he did not know me. He knows me well. When I was on Robben Island he was in B-Section with the former Rivonia trialists. In one of the summer games when I was in B-Section conducting the choir, he was there with other leaders applauding me.

The person who once rescued me in DI was Brigadier General Lengisi (Ret.) – I was once with him in G-Section on Robben Island – when he was a director. He took me from a useless post of transport clerk, that was based on the ground floor and placed me in his directorate on the 21st floor. Unfortunately, the forces allied with my main, very influential and manipulative sideliner, were in full force and in charge in that specific directorate. As a result, I did not get a post where I could get a car and a laptop, to move around the country working in the field, like most of

the directorate's members including former TBVC members (a post everyone desired). I was given a post that confined me to the office. All the Brigadier General (Cde Ta Leng as we used to call him in prison) did was to delegate them to give me a post. He was not entitled at an operational level to determine where I was deployed in the directorate. He wanted me to liaise with other government departments, trying to empower me, because he knew my capabilities from Robben Island. That was sabotaged.

In the Defence Intelligence Division in the late 1990s, I was called by a group of my own comrades (we used to call them *lekgotla* because they were influential in the building) to be reprimanded for talking about a comrade who contributed to my under-ranking and marginalisation. He was the one who called the meeting, because he was very opportunistic and influential – even the chief of defence intelligence at the time seemed to have had confidence in him. The late Cde Willy Baloyi who was a Staff Sergeant like me at the time, and a friend of mine, once said I was lonely because I was being sidelined by the *lekgotla*, who at the time seemed to have been the only ANC and MK cadre in the division. Perhaps that is why my friend had that impression. I was indeed sidelined, marginalised and frustrated by them. As a result, within their midst, even those who knew me never cared to intervene in resolving my case. They thought that I would just disintegrate psychologically. I used to tell myself to re-harness the strength I had during my imprisonment (nine years) and solitary confinement (six months). Currently, I seem to be expected to worship and glorify those who happen to be lucky enough to have been deployed in senior positions. In my specific work environment, and as a professional soldier, I do respect and salute those who are senior to me in terms of rank, regardless of their age and service. The army is an hierarchical and authoritarian institution that is based on one-man-one-command, rightly so. That I support, for you cannot have an army that practices democracy, because you will end up having soldiers who question orders instead of fighting the enemy. If you do not accept that, then soldiering is not suitable for you as a career. That I have accepted and have known for at least 42 years, when quite a number of my current seniors had not yet been born. Unfortunately for me, I am sometimes reminded by certain senior officers that, as a warrant officer, I am not a commissioned officer and that perhaps I am less intelligent and analytical than them. In the army, the intellectual capacity of a person usually correlates with rank, hence we have commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The higher your rank as an officer, the more you



are expected to be intellectually capacitated, with the ability to think strategically. I fully concur because a commander is supposed to have a bigger picture than his/her subordinates. Their lives depend on his/her battle decisions.

A certain colonel once shouted at me, in front of subordinates, when I delayed going downstairs (from the 20th floor to the reception at ground floor) to fetch a research proposal document from him when he was waiting at the reception. I had to explain to him that I was late because I had a backlog of work to do and was therefore busy dealing with many other research proposals. I also told him that I would be the one who would evaluate his proposal, as well as the resultant thesis or dissertation. Furthermore, after realising that the colonel did not basically understand the importance of my job in relation to his academic career, I also alluded, without sounding offensive and intimidating to the fact that, based on my own evaluation from a security perspective that is informed by legislative guidelines, my line function (duty sheet) empowers me to either authorise or decline. The colonel was bamboozled. He thought I had been sent by my senior to collect the document. Perhaps he thought a warrant officer was not intellectually capacitated to deal with academic issues. Nonetheless, he had no right to disrespect me based on his seniority. Similarly, a civilian lady, who works in the defence headquarters with a director rank was referred to me by my boss Brigadier General so that I could deal with her document. She told the secretary of the General that she could not deal with a warrant officer. Fortunately, that message did not come to me directly, otherwise her day would have been spoilt, like that of the aforementioned colonel. In the words of Cde Mandela, 'If you want the cooperation of humans around you, you must make them feel they are important – and you do that by being genuine and humble.'<sup>40</sup> For me personally, that constitutes a most important component part of being a mature human – having humility and integrity.

It must be embarrassing to be intellectually disarmed by a person you have stereotyped as intellectually less capable than oneself by virtue of one's position. Based on the necessary division of labour in society, the work of a cleaner is as important as the work of anyone else. Nobody has the right to undermine others on the basis of rank or status. For me that is a sign of immaturity, pomposity and snobbishness. Since I was one of the first groups to integrate in the SANDF in 1994, I understand the corporate culture and take everything in my stride. I know very

well who I am as a former committed and dedicated revolutionary and Freedom Fighter of uMkhonto weSizwe, who sacrificed and contributed immensely to the liberation of this country. As I write, I have 27 months before my time comes to exit the system at the age of 60. I hope they will just leave me alone to do my job peacefully to the best of my ability, as my humble contribution to the consolidation of our democracy, as I have been doing consistently over the years before my retirement.

# Prelude to negotiations (CODESA)

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During the late 1980s, political pressure was mounting against the regime. The MDM inside the country and the anti-apartheid forces outside the country demanded the unconditional release of political prisoners, the unbanning of the banned organisations and the return of exiles. The regime offered to release the Rivonia trialists, particularly Cde Madiba who was then at Pollsmoor Prison, on certain conditions. Oppressive governments have the naïve tendency to overemphasise the role of a leader, at the expense of the collective. The thought is that by neutralising the leader, you weaken or destroy the organisation. Isolating the leader from his comrades provides an opportunity to break him. Amongst the former Rivonia trialists, only one accepted conditional release. Fortunately, uTata uMadiba believed in consulting his comrades. We were continually kept informed about the discussions Cde Madiba held with the regime while he was in Pollsmoor Prison and later in Victor Verster Prison, near Paarl. Prior to the formal negotiations between the NP regime and the ANC, an internal consultation and communication process unfolded between Robben Island political prisoners, the internal leadership of the UDF/MDM and the external ANC leadership led by Cde O.R. based in Lusaka. The ultimate release of leaders from Robben Island Prison and the return of those who were in exile resulted from the collective decision of a tripartite consultation, which laid the foundation for the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA).<sup>41</sup>

The culmination of the rejection of the offer for a conditional release by Cde Madiba was the public reading of the letter by his daughter uZinzi in 1985 at the Orlando Stadium. It was a moving and powerful message that boosted the morale of the masses, as it was the first time they had

heard from their icon Cde Rolihlahla Mandela since he was incarcerated in the 1960s. After the leadership had been released unconditionally, those of us still in prison were offered release on condition that we signed indemnity forms that stipulated the conditions under which we were to be released. This would have constituted an expression of remorse for having engaged in the revolutionary struggle. We were being requested to denounce, in writing, the armed struggle as a means of resolving the political problems of the country. We were supposed to sell our souls and principles and desert and abandon what we stood and sacrificed for over so many years. A foolish and ludicrous expectation.

In his first speech in Cape Town, shortly after his release, with the then young Cde Cyril Ramaphosa seen on TV holding a microphone for him to speak; Cde Mandela reaffirmed his commitment for the continuation of the armed struggle if the apartheid regime did not comply with the demands enshrined in the Harare Declaration, the protagonist of which was Cde O.R. Tambo. I was once personally worried when Cde O.R. addressed the ANC Conference in Durban with slurred speech after being made a Chairperson of the ANC, when he had already suffered a massive stroke. His health had deteriorated owing to the workload of almost single-handedly ensuring the success of the Harare Declaration and the buy-in of leaders of the frontline states. During his awkward address I said to myself that it was unfortunate that South Africans did not have the opportunity to see, hear and get to know the vibrant, effervescent, and highly articulate Cde O.R., the one to whom I had several opportunities to listen as far back as 1978 in Angola when he was in his element and in his healthiest state. I even thought that the Movement should not have allowed him to speak in that physical state, although I could understand that the Movement was trying to show the world that Cde O.R. was still at the helm of the ANC when he was made its Chairperson. The media tried to compare and create a wedge between him and Cde Madiba, who immediately squashed the perception it was trying to create. He even mentioned that Cde O.R. was everything to him and like his own brother. Back in the 1940s the two had been active in the ANC Youth League and later practised as attorneys in the same company.

On Robben Island, after we rejected the offer of conditional release, we embarked on a lengthy hunger strike to support our demand for unconditional release. The former Honourable Minister of Energy Cde Jeff Radebe as a legal mind, helped in the formulation of our demands.

We were aware that the hunger strike was part of the broader struggle being waged by progressive forces for the unconditional release of all political prisoners. The presence of two qualified medical doctors, Dr Vijay Ramlakan and Dr Sibongiseni Dlomo, in our midst allowed us to improvise an electrolyte solution of salt, sugar and water. We were thus able to sustain it for almost two weeks.

After Cde Madiba had been released, he once visited us on Robben Island, with Ms Judy Moon, an attorney from Mallinicks, Cape Town, who represented most of us, along with Ms Priscilla Jana, who later became a Member of Parliament. Cde Madiba told us that the Nationalist Party was prevaricating regarding our unconditional release because F.W. de Klerk had whispered to him that they did not want to be seen to be capitulating, especially by their constituencies. They did ultimately capitulate. In April 1991, I was in the last group of Robben Island prisoners to be released unconditionally. This marked the end of Robben Island's existence as a prison.

Those who understand how bourgeois propaganda operates in a capitalist society will concur with me that the mass media and some political analysts tend to undermine the masses, while glorifying individual leaders. Yet those leaders are the products of mass struggles. Shortly after the elections of 8 May 2019, there was a narrative to the effect that the success of the ANC was solely because of President Cde Cyril Ramaphosa. ANC victory was attributed to him despite the hard work of campaigning by many. It was widely proclaimed that he single-handedly saved the ANC from a 'credibility crisis'. The masses did not necessarily vote for the ANC but voted for him. Similarly, the ANC had previously been reduced to the person of Cde Nelson Mandela. Some even thought that perhaps when Cde Madiba passed on the whole ANC would disintegrate and cease to exist.

During the ANC National Executive Meeting that was held in August 2020, the media reported that the battle lines would be drawn owing to factionalism within the ANC, with some members against the incumbent in the person of Cde Cyril Ramaphosa. That impression was created because of the dissenting voices of only three members of the ANC: former President Jacob Zuma, Cde Tony Yengeni and Cde Lungisa who openly attacked the president. In the eNCA Newsroom there was a headline banner describing the meeting saying 'Factional Battles in the ANC. Who is going to be victorious?' Unfortunately for them, the president and six other top members, reported back with one

voice, with no sign of battle lines being drawn. There was no apology from the media for deceiving the people with their predictions.

It is because of this individual glorification and gullibility in capitalist society that certain individuals are endowed with god-like powers, as though they have answers to all perplexing questions. This constitutes one of the most important components of false consciousness, which is basically meant to keep people subservient and subjugated. They are encouraged to leave everything to certain individuals, including the resolution of their own material conditions to people they unconsciously regard as saints. The ANC has always stressed the importance of a collective leadership, specifically to avoid the 'personality cult', putting an individual above the organisation or society. Popular media does this for all parties, which is why, for example at the time of writing, Malema is the personification of the EFF, Holomisa of the UDM, 'Terror' Lekota of COPE, Helen Zille of the DA, and Reverend Meshoe of the ACDP. The phenomenon was evident in the collapse of the NFP when its leader withdrew from active politics, and of Agang SA when Mamphela Ramphele resigned. The dangers of the personality cult are similarly evident north of the Limpopo River. Zimbabwe became economically and politically dysfunctional after Robert Mugabe reduced the country into a fiefdom for himself, his wife and his cronies, leaving ordinary people in grinding poverty and squalor. Sometime ago the Ugandan President Museveni, fired the whole parliament and hired, among others, his wife as a Minister of Education. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mobutu Seseseko who was the head of state before he was overthrown by the rebels led by the late Kabila senior, was once said to be richer than his own country. The country used to borrow money from him. The systematisation of looting and corruption stems *inter alia* exactly from the lack of accountability of inordinately elevated individual leaders.

On several occasions Cde Rolihlahla Mandela was at pains to explain that he should not be singled out, because he was not alone in the struggle, but was part of the collective that made sacrifices and paid a supreme price for South Africa to achieve a democratic dispensation. This approach might have created the impression that the only people incarcerated on Robben Island were the Rivonia trialist comrades such as Mandela, Sisulu, Mhlaba, Kathrada, Mlangeni, Mbeki, Motsoaledi, Mkwai and Goldberg. Awards in recognition of contributions towards the achievement of freedom and democracy always place these

individuals in the limelight. Those who were exiled in the cities of the USA or UK tend to be more celebrated than those who spent years in the Angolan bush. This explains why it has been amazingly easy for a person like me to be pushed aside, as though I am a nonentity who never sacrificed my life and youth for the struggle to liberate this country. In the final analysis, President Cde Cyril Ramaphosa would not have been where he is today if it were not for the ordinary overall-clad workers of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) for which he was at one point the General Secretary. Likewise, Cde Rolihlahla Mandela would not have been one of the giants of our revolution if it were not for the clarion call of the oppressed masses to take up arms against apartheid by forming the military wing of the ANC, uMkhonto weSizwe.

South Africa is said to be one of the most polarised and unequal societies in the world. For me, that constitutes a situation that is likely to make it difficult for anyone to be on the 'middle road', especially when it comes to the pressing problems that are facing the country. This should be more applicable to those who belong to the intelligentsia, who have the advantage of being educated, with the capacity to see beyond the deceptive façade. If there is anyone who can say there is a 'middle road' then it means it will be difficult to sustain, because in our socioeconomic and political situation that middle road is artificial, a fake. Some even question the impartiality and neutrality of the very judges of the Constitutional Court because the universities where they obtained their law degrees were never neutral in the objective sense of the word, but representative of a particular ideological hegemony as scientifically defined by Gramsci. Please allow me, for the benefit of emphasis, to define it once more, namely as, 'the permeation throughout the entire society of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations.' A white Afrikaner judge once bamboozled and shocked everyone by uttering racist statements to the effect that black men are more likely to rape or be rapists, is testimony to this. She held that although the Constitution obliges judges to be impartial and objective, they are also human beings, with certain sets of beliefs that are derived from the society in which they live. Just imagine if this did not explode in the media and exposed her, what would have happened to the victims of future judgments skewed in a similar way. She is not alone. The former Deputy Chief Justice (Ret.) Mr Dikgang Moseneke was once caught off guard uttering a highly charged anti-ANC political statement, shortly before the Polokwane Conference.

The statement demonstrated his partisanship. Cde Kgalema Motlanthe and Cde Mathews Phosa later visited him to seek clarification of his comments, which they considered as unbecoming of a sitting judge.

On the USA bench, judges tend to be identified either as conservative or progressive. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg, a Democrat, was known to be a strong advocate of human rights and outspoken opponent of racism. When she died, President Donald Trump is said to have replaced her with a conservative judge, thereby constituting a Republican-inclined majority on the bench. As far as I am concerned, the notion of absolute objectivity is false consciousness and a figment of the imagination that does not seem to blend with the objective laws that govern human nature and society. What is in a human being's mind is derived from the socioeconomic conditions of his/her existence. No one can deny the fact that 26 years into our freedom, the majority of Black Africans still live in conditions of squalor, degradation, and indignity. Why do we then have people who are said to have great minds, remaining quiet in the face of such issues, who behave as though it is business as usual?

During the era of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in the 1970s, concepts such as Black Theology and Liberation Theology emerged in response to the brutality of apartheid and the consequent political crisis. During the mid-1980s the brutality of the apartheid regime was at its peak, in response to peaceful protests. Religious leaders had to take a stand and were compelled to join the masses in the picketing lines in the streets, for they could not fold their arms in the name of neutrality. However, since the democratic implementation of a very progressive Constitution, partisanship and the taking of sides manifests itself in subtle and sophisticated class-based ways. Whereas before 1994 it was easy to see the distinction between races and between the oppressor and the oppressed, the widespread absorption of Black Africans into the bourgeois capitalist class masks this distinction.

Ultimately truth can never be absolute; it is always relative and will remain as such, especially when it must relate to a socioeconomic and political conditions of a society that is undergoing transition. In our situation, with a history of a polarised and unequal society, you are likely to have two types of intellectuals: those who represent the working class and the poor, and those who represent the bourgeois class, whether they do so intentionally or unintentionally. Those who represent the working class and the poor are supposed to develop counterhegemonic strategies in defence of the intellectually and ideologically vulnerable. That can



only be possible if they manage to resist the ideological neutralisation and co-option by the resourcefully powerful capital. Under normal circumstances, the Communist Party, as the most class-conscious and ideologically matured vanguard of the working class, is supposed to be playing that historic role boldly and openly. Under the current circumstances, the main content of our revolutionary struggle is, among other things, characterised by a subtle ideological class struggle where it becomes more difficult to draw the battle lines than before. Karl Marx said, 'Human beings have the capacity to freely, consciously and actively shape their lives in cooperation with others; this is precisely what makes them human. If they are not able to do so, if they are pawns of other persons or impersonal natural or social forces beyond their control, they are not fully human.'<sup>42</sup> The implication is that they behave as blind natural forces that are swayed by the so-called faceless market forces of capitalism.

# The role and function of education and mass media

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The ideas that rule society are the ideas of those who rule, namely, the ideas of the ruling class or elite. It is their prerogative to formulate the education system to be in line with their class and material interests. As citizens of the society, we are unfortunately dependent on those who govern for information, which is provided via the media, and knowledge, as provided by the education system. It stands to reason that in an unequal society like ours, the narrative to be perpetuated will be that of domination and subordination or 'master and servant.' It will dominate all spheres of existence to ensure that people toe the line without complaint. In 1954, the then Prime Minister of South Africa, Dr H.F. Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid and Bantu Education said, 'The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour... For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption into the European community while he cannot and will not be absorbed there.'<sup>43</sup> Subsequently, independent schools run by the Anglican and other churches were obliged to teach syllabi approved by the National Party government. It therefore never surprised me, during the '#Fees must Fall' protests, when the university students called for the 'Decolonisation of Education.'

So, for the oppressors to rule and govern effectively they normally make more use of the 'carrot' than a 'stick' with 70% and 30% respectively. The former is constituted largely by the education system and the media, with their intellectual representatives as university academics and political analysts. In movies especially those from Hollywood, you will always find a dominant character who is a saviour,

with so much superpower that his invincibility is taken for granted, unquestioned and somehow imbued with divine powers. This has the effect of indoctrinating or conditioning people that it is a normal way of life and common sense in the society to be subjected to domination (servitude) in one way or another. In a very subtle way, that is also a narrative you are likely to find in church institutions, where we are told that when someone slaps you on one cheek, just give him another cheek, in a way encouraging subordination and subservience.

Even the very reference in the Holy Bible to God as 'He/Him' is nothing but the reflection of a particular historic condition and social relations of patriarchy (male dominance) in the society. In our specific situation, with a horrible history of racial discrimination and polarisation, Father Christmas was always portrayed as a bearded white man in red and white attire. When we visit shopping malls during Christmas season, even as Black Africans, we would proudly allow our children to have pictures taken with this man. We never asked ourselves why it is always a white man in that role. The reason is that we have been subjected to social conditioning and programming, to the extent that even those things that do not represent our interests as Black Africans have been made to look as if they do, another effect of state propaganda. Logically, all states rule societies through some form of propaganda to maintain and justify their rule. Steve Biko explained it very well, 'The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.'<sup>44</sup> He advocated mental liberation, a phenomenon that is still far from being achieved in our country.

The subtle psychological conditioning in capitalist society assists the perpetuation of America's jingoistic Rambo-style posture in world affairs. A highly-funded and sophisticated propaganda network of media houses, works alongside the 'stick' that manifests in the form of a multi-billion-dollar arms industry. The manufacture of sophisticated inter-continental ballistic missiles feeds imperialist whims regarding potential death and destruction in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, and we do not know where else, tomorrow. After the first moon landing by Americans in July 1969, everyone knew of Neil Armstrong and Apollo 11. Fewer were aware that the Soviet Union's Yuri Gagarin was the first human to go into space in 1961.

The very reference to Africans as 'Blacks' is a social construct and stereotyping perpetuated since the era of enslavement of people

from the African continent. Scientifically speaking, our complexion does not resemble a black colour and likewise those who are referred to as white do not resemble a white colour. A black colour is always associated with bad omen, yet a white colour with purity. Although I am a very dark-complexioned person, I am far from being the same colour as that of black polish! Black African celebrities, who are supposed to be role models for our children, are not helping at all. They do not seem to be proud of being black and dark-complexioned – that is why there is widespread bleaching and colouration to be white-complexioned; an industry that has become very lucrative. The persistent inferiority complex based on the colonial mentality from which Steve Biko tried extremely hard to liberate us, must make him turn in his grave. Take a Black African child to a toy shop where there are both black and white dolls, and she is likely to choose the white one. The child has eyes to see and a brain to process and digest what she sees. What she is currently seeing is that some of our Black African compatriots, especially those who are influential celebrities are striving to be light-complexioned, implying that a black colour is not good enough. The road ahead is still exceedingly long. In South Africa we need a strong feminist movement whose task, among other things, would be to conscientise our celebrities to be good role models for our children. They should stop bleaching and discontinue their indulgence in debauchery and crass materialism. Who in their right and sensible mind, can be proud of the version of Michael Jackson who seemed to have been disintegrating and looked like a zombie before he died? I strongly hope that our current Miss South Africa in whom we, as Black African people, are all proud, maintains her simple Afrocentric image and shows the world that simplicity and sophistication are not mutually exclusive. As a Black African woman with a very dark complexion and short hair, you do not necessarily have to bleach and have weaves to be the best in the world. I say, ‘go gal I salute you.’

A revolutionary struggle is, by its nature, the most serious intellectual endeavour of gigantic historic significance in society. Revolutionaries are up against the powerful, those who control the government and state machinery and the material means of production, as well as the intellectual means of production. For an oppressive State whose rule is not based on the will of the majority, it stands in need of two forms of rule namely, the ‘carrot and the stick’; the ‘priest and the

hangman' with the carrot or priest constituting 70% of that rule. The carrot includes the entire education system to justify the status quo, as well as churches and the audio-visual mass media. A revolutionary activist needs to be an organic intellectual with the capacity and mandate to challenge the hegemonic control of the bourgeois at an ideological level. That can only be possible if the revolutionary is armed with the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism.

Fortunately, all the progressive revolutionary organisations agree on this, as became clear to me during my time in the Soviet Union in 1981. That is where I saw people from different countries and liberation movements speaking the same anti-colonial and imperialist ideological language, who were there for military training. Here I am talking about SWAPO of Namibia, ZIPRA of Zimbabwe, PFLP of the Palestinians, the Viet Cong of Vietnam, Sandanistas of Nicaragua, the conventional army of Ethiopian (already liberated under Mengistu), as well as comrades from Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and many others. They all subscribed to Marxist-Leninist classics. One must remember that at the time the Cold War between the West and East was at its peak, the ideological divide was clear and glaring.

Lenin cautioned revolutionaries to beware of intellectuals, since they are products of bourgeois education and are taught to sway and deceive the masses. In some instances, they assume leadership positions within smokescreen organisations that are not genuine and authentic representatives of the oppressed people. During our trials as so-called terrorists, you would often find an expert witness who was said to be a political scientist, to confirm the dangerous and terroristic nature of the ANC. Their role was to motivate for a death sentence or a very long time in prison. As Lenin said,

The real education of the masses can never be separated from their independent political, and especially revolutionary struggle. Only struggle educates the exploited and oppressed class. Only struggle discloses to it the magnitude of its own power, widens its horizon, enhances its abilities, clarifies its mind, forges its will.<sup>45</sup>

The ANC repurposed Robben Island as a revolutionary college to imbue comrades with a new form of consciousness. We had all the time at our disposal to delve deeper into issues of political, ideological,

philosophical, and academic importance. In fact, I had never in my life encountered such an intense intellectually charged environment, with a sense of genuine comradeship reigning supreme. Imagine being in the company of the likes of the late Cde Peter Mokaba and many others like him, in the same cell for one, two, three or four years, literally discussing relevant issues on a daily basis. Politically and intellectually, he was among the most seasoned comrades with whom I used to enjoy engaging and discussing while I was in E-Section. He was down-to-earth and humble, and used to avail himself to teach comrades who were doing Maths and Physics, because he was also an ace in those subjects. He even used to help comrades to write letters to their lawyers, empowered by his postgraduate studies in law. I must say that he was one of the most politically solid intellectuals I ever came across during our National Liberation Struggle.

Without a degree, my knowledge and understanding of that philosophy and politics has enabled me to be of assistance to Siphesihle, in her pursuit of a master's degree in International Politics and Political Economy. She intends to do research on BRICS. Lately, I am beginning to realise that she has become intellectually independent as her requests for assistance are no longer as regular as when she was doing her first degree, Bachelor of Arts and Administration, at the University of Pretoria. This independence is much appreciated. Based on the material she provides, we sometimes engage in very fruitful conversations, discussing such global issues as the decline of the Washington Consensus, the role of BRICS under the current global set-up, the American jingoistic posture in world politics, imperialism and financialism, and the commodification of capitalist society.

To contextualise the latter, one can safely say that here in our country we seem to be at the level of an extreme commodification, where even politics of struggle have become commodified and elitist, constituting an opportunity to access resources and a stepping-stone for self-enrichment. Former revolutionaries who are deployed in senior and influential positions of responsibility in government, and tasked to deliver to the poorest of the poor, have become bourgeois. They are now referred to as A-Listers in celebrity circles and functions. They seem to be absorbed by the glitter and glamour of their new lifestyle. The struggle for them seems to be over, only existing in rhetoric and theory. The whole situation can be referred to as a radical transition from political/revolutionary activism to political careerism.

The glittering and glamorous celebration of the birthday of the former President of the ANC and the country, Cde Thabo Mbeki, was a typical example. It was witnessed by millions of people on TV, showing the presence of many socialites and celebrities. The majority who are still subjected to hunger on a daily basis, were expected to watch in envy. In fact, these days it is difficult to draw a distinction between celebrities and politicians. The NDR has been superseded by middle class elitism, while Radical Economic Transformation is now almost off the agenda. It is no wonder that Mrs Basetsane Khumalo, a very wealthy and highly renowned celebrity, respected media mogul and television personality once said that she was ready to serve in the ANC. By this she was implying that she was ready to be parachuted to occupy a senior position probably in government. I cannot imagine Basetsane attending a 1, a foundation, or a nucleus of the ANC in a local township primary school. She is too sophisticated for that. For in the final analysis, the ANC does not belong to the elite as some are trying desperately to assert.

At a party that Mathabo and I once attended, a lady comrade who happened to be director-general of a certain government department, asked us whether we had been invited. She immediately appeared like a stupid fool, when the host (DG) welcomed us and subsequently chatted with us, discussing issues of political significance, that she probably could not have been able to handle. To add the cherry on top, and perhaps also salt on her already wounded ego, when we were about to leave the party, I was given an expensive bottle of whiskey, and Mathabo, a bottle of expensive red wine by both the host and his wife, as a token of their appreciation for our presence at the party. Poor gatekeeper was truly shocked and ended up with egg on her face.

Since that incident, whenever we meet, she makes a point of greeting me and refers to me as 'Bhuti Khaya' ... rightly so, because I am even older than her. Of course, as a cultured gentleman of civility with consistent good social manners, I always greet her back with a smile, whilst hoping that she might have learnt her lesson not to take people for granted. People must learn to 'keep to their lane' and leave us alone, those they think are not successful, materially speaking, lest they find themselves appearing like a fool as she did. Human beings are complex creatures to be merely defined and characterised at face value and be locked into some kind of a stupid box. This gatekeeping phenomenon seems to have infected our movement like a disease. During that same party, two comrades were delegated to receive my

CV on the following Monday. Astonishingly, on receipt of my CV, my comrades told me to hide my Xhosa origin, because the head of the directorate to which I was supposed to be deployed was a tribalist and anti-Xhosa. Just imagine? How I hate to be judged in terms of characteristics that are not of my choice or design. Displays of status consciousness, pomposity, snobbishness, conceit, over-inflated ego, chauvinism, and other egoistical prejudices are expressions of weakness. Looking down upon other people because you feel they are inferior to you whether from a socioeconomic or intellectual point of view, reflects stupidity and intellectual underdevelopment. From the psychological perspective, it is a form of defence mechanism called displacement. No sensible person with a balanced mind, and emotional or social intelligence, engages in such things. They are comfortable in their own skin, and have no time to waste on asserting or validating their ego at the expense of others. They are characterised by a visible and infectious sense of humility and lack of pomposity, with no conceit or snobbishness.

The ANC belongs to the downtrodden, wretched, and poverty-stricken masses of this country. The ANC leadership has to visit squalid areas to canvas for votes. They win elections because of the votes of the poor majority. When the ANC was formed in 1912, as the first organisation in South African history to assume a national character, it was for the specific purpose of uniting the Black African poor majority. Prior to that, the resistance against oppressive colonialism took place in a disparate fashion, with differing approaches by tribe and region. These were known as the wars of resistance, which culminated in the Bambatha Rebellion against the poll tax in 1906. Then in Bloemfontein, on 8 January 1912, African intellectuals including Josiah Gumede, John Dube, Pixley ka Seme and Sol Plaatje formed the South African Native National Convention (SANNC), which became the African National Congress (ANC). Referring to the ANC as a Movement is therefore deliberate. It had always been dialectically and organically connected with the social history of South Africa. In the elections of 8 May 2019, the people renewed the mandate of the ANC to resolve the issue of poverty and unemployment. President Ramaphosa pronounced, '*Thuma mina*', but to this I think must be added '*Khawuleza*' (faster) and a definite '*Ngoku*' (now). Despite and because of Ramaphosa's links with business and capitalism, I have confidence in him and strongly believe that he has what it takes to lead the country to ultimate emancipation.



As Cde Gwede Mantashe said, 'at least he is a rich man and therefore will not be tempted to steal.' The only problem I have with the Honourable Cde President is that he appears to be closer to business and capitalists than he is to the working class and the poor, who should matter the most.

# The significance of family cohesion

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I have now deliberately elected to intensify my focus and attention more on consolidating and solidifying my family. This is to ensure that, despite the lack of financial and material resources, at least on an emotional, spiritual, and intellectual level, I manage to have a solid, balanced, healthy and happy family relationship. Perhaps, among other things, this is to disprove an implicit popular myth that material possession is everything and a yardstick for success and happiness in the family. Experience is showing that social outcasts or psychological deviants do not necessarily come from those who are on the lower ladder of the socioeconomic situation, poverty-stricken and destitute families. Think about the sad case of the late Hope Zinde, who was one of the most respected and successful women in media circles, in the same league as Basetsane Khumalo and energetic, enthusiastic 'Queen B' Bonang Matheba, whose TV show is among my favourites. Hope Zinde was a woman of integrity and the epitome of Black African female excellence and success in the male-dominated world of the media. I held her in high esteem as a career woman role model of sophisticated demeanour coupled with simplicity.

Ironically, Hope Zinde was brutally murdered by her own son. He was a drug addict, studying at the University of Pretoria and reportedly driving a beautiful top of the range Mercedes Benz that his mother proudly bought for him as a sign of her love. It makes me cringe to imagine her last moments, being brutally physically assaulted and dying in such a terrible way, at the hands of her own son. May her soul rest in eternal peace and her stupid lunatic son rot in jail. Similarly, the Van Breda murders in Stellenbosch by a the son of a wealthy white family. Also a drug user, he murdered his parents with an axe and may have left his

sister with brain damage and a permanent loss of memory. Other cases of drugs and suicide have involved the children of cabinet ministers. These examples are an indication of decline in the moral fabric of the family. Values and norms of traditional order, cohesion, ubuntu and discipline have been corroded, especially since 1994, simultaneously with the emergence of bourgeois mentalities of selfishness, egoism and survival of the fittest. If this happens to well-off families, how much more to those on the lowest socioeconomic ladder of the society?

The institution of the family is the foundation and backbone of society, the nucleus to which the State should pay special attention. Parenting should be regarded as a learned skill that must no longer be taken for granted as an instinctive or natural process that must be left to chance. Some parents are unfit for the role. They inadvertently create monsters and social outcasts out of their own children because of the lack of parental skills. In such situations, it is quite possible that they are also products of parenting and upbringing that went horribly wrong and are therefore perpetuating what they subconsciously internalised and assimilated as the norm. The social material conditions of existence determine behaviour and thought processes. When I indulge in introspection to plan positive changes in my life and personality, I realise both the good and the bad traits that I acquired during my upbringing.

In the system of formal education, parenting should in one way or another, be incorporated as a component. Deliberate and conscious effort is required to inculcate social norms and values into the minds and consciousness of children, to enable them to be progressive and productive citizens. The family is the origin of great leaders and productive citizens, just as much as it is of dangerous criminals, drug addicts, women batterers, child-molesters, and psychopaths. They assimilated and internalised traits during their upbringing from their families. That is why I can say with certainty and confidence that my son, who is currently 15 years old, will never be a woman abuser because of the moral values I inculcate in him.

When I engage with Siphesihle in intellectual polemics, her mother sometimes gets annoyed because she is not interested in Social Sciences and Humanities. Her strengths are the Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics, and she dominates and the rest of us keep quiet and listen and learn. In 1991, when she applied to study Medical Technology at the Port Elizabeth Technicon, she was never put through a bridging programme, but went straight into the mainstream of

science-related disciplines. The significance of her skills struck me when I attended her BA graduation ceremony. There were about 30 graduands, as opposed to less than 20 for an honours degree, less than ten for a master's degree, and only two or three PhDs, a pyramid shape situation. It seems that Black Africans in particular drop out after their bachelor's degree, not because of their intellectual capacity but owing to socioeconomics. How can one continue with studies whilst there is hunger back home?

Mathabo once demonstrated her expertise when we were visiting friends. She was having a discussion with the late Brigadier General Ntsibande revolving around Physics and Maths. The Brigadier General was working in the Air Force at the time, and you cannot be in that arm of service with that senior rank without a very sophisticated knowledge and understanding of science. He was genuinely quite impressed and surprised by the ease with which she elucidated scientific concepts of the discipline. I was also impressed but not surprised. In 1991, when she was busy with her studies, funded by the Batlagae Trust Fund in association with the National Coordinating Committee for Repatriation (NCCR), that was specifically meant to sponsor returnees who were pursuing academic studies, I came into the picture fresh from prison as an ex-convict desperate to find a romantic partner. I made her pregnant, which arrested and discontinued her academic development.

Years later, when Siphesihle was writing her matric exams at Glen High School in Pretoria East, we were living in a flat in Trevenna Court, next to Sunny Park Mall. During the exams, it so happened that we did not have money to buy electricity. She persisted in her studies using a cell phone torch, and passed the exams. I had a gut feeling that if it were not for the financial crisis, she would have done even better in those exams. I had sometimes managed to provide her with a fortnightly allowance of R500 to R700, so that when she was out there, perhaps studying in a library, she could at least grab herself a cup of coffee or a cold drink. Hopefully that kept the predatory pervert *blessers* at bay, always ready to pounce on financially vulnerable students.

In 2011 after completing her matric, Siphesihle took a gap year owing to a lack of funds and a bursary to start university studies. She landed a part-time job at a restaurant in Sunny Park Mall called Rhapsody. In hindsight, that work experience was a learning curve for her, a literal 'baptism of fire.' It gave her time to realise that education is particularly important as a weapon for personal freedom. It was

very tough because we once had to visit the restaurant to call to order the pervert restaurant manager who was bothering young employees with sexual advances. Just imagine what it was like for those who did not have parental back-up but were desperate to work in order to earn an income. It must have been like a walk in the park, for a perverted sexual scoundrel who deserved to be castrated. We took her out of that stupid job. Perhaps as a result of that experience, when we go out as a family to eat at a restaurant, she is always the one who reminds us to tip the waiter. On resumption of her studies in 2012, she got into the academic mainstream with guns blazing.

Sadly, we nearly lost our boy Sizwe to paralysis, because once he contracted a terrible, rare neurological illness referred to as a 'Guillain-Barré syndrome' that paralysed the whole of his body. It was so bad that he was bedridden and had to be hospitalised in 1 Military Hospital from the 21 November 2019 to 14 February 2020. When we googled the illness, it was said to be so rare that it affects only one person out of 100 000. I even asked myself a question every parent when faced with such a predicament is likely to ask, namely, 'Why my son?' According to Professor Baker, head of the 1 Military Department of Neurology, the cost of his treatment was almost one million rand. Thanks to the fact that I am in the army the cost was covered; imagine if I had been working in the private sector, with medical aid, where the cost of even a single tablet is deducted from the annual allowance? Sizwe has recovered, but is still limping and undergoing physiotherapy. I am so thankful to Dr Sesani who was his neurological specialist, and the medical team that was responsible for my boy's medical care, the physiotherapists and occupational therapists and Professor Baker.

If parents embody negative tendencies, children are most likely to follow suit, for indeed as a parent, you are the main mediator between your child and the outside world. That is why the first word the child is likely to utter when she/he is an infant learning to talk, is Mama and Tata if the latter happens to be around. Mathabo and I used to laugh when Sizwe combined both terms into 'Mata.' I found that highly creative and cute. All parents must be aware and be conscious of the impact they have on their children as their personalities unfold. As children grow, two things likely to influence them both negatively or positively are the company they keep and the books they read. To counteract the negative influences of the outside and peer pressure, parents should spare no effort to guide their children positively. They should learn to connect

with them, not only on a functional and materialistic level, but also on an emotional level. A consistent expressive emotionality, humaneness, and a positive mental attitude in the household, that is geared towards the creation of a conducive environment for the development of a well-balanced and psychologically integrated personality requires a conscious and deliberate effort. When Sizwe calls for my attention and says to me, 'Dad look!' (*Tata jonga* in isiXhosa), he is trying to show me, as it is his nature to do, a small achievement or something he has mastered. For that reason, I genuinely pay attention because I am quite conscious that it will help in the long run. Siphesihle's postgraduate achievements testify to this. All that is required is to deliberately create an environment conducive for the flourishing of children's minds, in a peaceful and tranquil family environment.

When Sizwe (aged 15 at the time of writing) discusses or argues with Siphesihle (who is ten years older and seems to be more vocal), I sometimes intervene when there is suppression of one by the other. Often however, it is the younger who suppresses the older! I intervene and tell them to give each other a chance. To build positive consciousness in a child starts with the little things that we normally take for granted, because subconsciously we think as parents, that children do not make sense and therefore must not be taken seriously. If that is the case, how can you expect a child to ever make sense and think like an adult? We must respect their intelligence, because they can ask questions that we cannot answer even as adults. Siphesihle once asked me: 'Who invented time?' and 'what comes first, a hen or an egg?'. If higher institutions of learning teach and research child psychology, shouldn't I as a parent take them seriously too? That I was able to educate Siphesihle to be where she is, was among other things, based on a conscious and deliberate effort to inculcate in her confidence, and both a positive consciousness and attitude towards education. For a plant to grow and blossom, it requires a conducive nurturing environment. Likewise, for a child to grow and succeed academically and socially, she/he needs a stress-free conducive family environment. As a product of the old school, I had to adapt my traditionalist ways to conform to the new circumstances of the digital world and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. I cannot relate to my children the way my parents used to relate to me. For example, to express constantly to my children that I love and care about them used to sound Eurocentric and make me feel awkward because I grew up not being openly expressive about my emotions. Yet, constantly reassuring

your child as a parent, particularly under the current challenging circumstances, has a very positive effect on their psychological make-up and has the potential to make things easier for them when they grow up and reach adulthood. They will be expected to be on their own in the impersonal, functional and materialistic new digital world.

Currently, a child can just SMS or WhatsApp whenever they want money from their parents. The parent can respond accordingly with a digital transfer and life goes on. This lifestyle is most prevalent amongst the well-off who can afford sophisticated gadgets of communication. Because so much communication is mediated by gadgets, there are few opportunities for a parent to sit down with a child and look them in the eyes and communicate directly. I once read a weird story in the newspaper about someone jogging along the Durban beachfront, who was hit by an aeroplane that crash-landed along the beach. Her earphones prevented her from hearing the plane approaching behind her. I personally dislike them. How many times must we call our daughter before she responds because of those earphones? A family friend used to bring her nine-year-old daughter, the same age as our daughter at that time, for weekend visits. The way the mother related to the child left much to be desired. For some parents, even if a child commits a minor mistake, they get subjected to unnecessary enraged shouting or even spanking. She was suppressed into submission after bombardment with negative messages such as 'no don't' rather than 'yes you can.' Unsurprisingly, the child lacked self-esteem and self-confidence and used to wet the bed. Sadly, that girl is now mothering three fatherless children, and is said to be over-indulging in alcohol. Schooling for her is non-existent. Her mother is disappointed and flabbergasted, oblivious to her role in causing the disaster.

At that age, when my child returned from the movies, I used to ask her to tell me what the movie was about and would listen attentively. She spoke English eloquently, without any compulsion. Although it is a colonial language that was imposed on Africans, I feel that our children must be encouraged to have a good command of the language, since it is an official medium of communication particularly within the context of the economic system. Sometimes, when friends visited our flat, I would request her to recite a poem for us, while we were busy entertaining ourselves. Of course, I would only do that after having assessed if the audience was child-friendly, as were many of our friends, who were married people with children. From time to time, I would ask

our daughter to read out loud an article from the *Sunday Times*, with the conscious aim of building an educated future adult. Parents should endeavour to bombard their children with positive messages, without putting pressure on them to be successful. If a parent is passive, the children will find their influences elsewhere, which might be negative in a cruel and inhumane world. Pressurising a child to succeed at all costs can be harmful and lead to stress and anxiety. We must avoid situations in which children attempt to commit suicide because they fail their matric exams. Positive upbringing bore fruit for Siphesihle and I hope she remains consistent and that negative influences out there do not become triumphant over the positives that we instilled in our household. We are doing the same with our youngest daughter, Nkcubeko, with an expectation that she too will not disappoint but will follow in the footsteps of her elder sister. Rich parents have an advantage because they do not have the daily frustrations and stress experienced by poor parents, who have to concern themselves with what is going to be eaten for breakfast, lunch, or supper, or even if there is anything to eat at all. This leaves no energy to focus on the emotional and intellectual development of a child, let alone a child's schoolwork. Marx said, 'mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.' That is why feeding schemes for schools in disadvantaged areas have been prioritised by government. Indeed, even having the energy and courage to believe in the existence of God the Almighty or anything else, requires that you have something in your stomach. Nothing will ever make sense to a person in the world until basic bodily needs are satisfied. To prove that, just go and ask those people who are displaced by wars in the refugee camps, who sometimes eat shrubs because there is nothing else to eat. They even lack the energy to listen to you until you bring them food to eat.

As parents, we have a subconscious and unintentional tendency to act out our inherited personal imperfections, inadequacies, failures, insecurities, fears, and frustrations from our dysfunctional past to our children because they happen to be defenceless and vulnerable. We do this oblivious to the fact that our behaviour shapes their future adult personalities and can either make or break them. Notwithstanding the psychological impact of the rotten system of the past on Black Africans, it is high time that as parents and adults, we regard our children not as liabilities and burdens but as assets that are worth investing in. We must



revert to the narrative that ‘a child belongs to the village.’ We should not regard them as objects to talk at. We need to listen and rationalise with them. Their young minds are easy to condition, programme and manipulate positively or negatively.

I have observed some people who either constantly interrupt or ignore their children when they are trying to express themselves. As a result, some children end up doubting their capabilities, always seemingly frightened and timid. In some instances, they end up developing speech defects like stammering, a consequence that was not intended by the adult or parent. There is a young couple next to where I am staying, that sometimes beat their young son, and at times lock him in the bathroom. My children tell me that when they play with him on the street, he is a bully who hits other children. His parents are not aware that they are indirectly creating an aggressive, violent monster out of that boy who could end up in prison. When the current ANC-led government abolished corporal punishment at schools, they did the right thing. Hitting a child in the name of discipline results in unintended consequences and social conditioning that perpetuates the behaviour.

At the end of weekend visits by some friends and their daughters, the children were reluctant to leave on a Sunday afternoon, sometimes crying, because we had deliberately made our house child-friendly. This progressive and revolutionary approach towards parenthood has limitations, though, because children are selfish by nature. When Sizwe was five years old, he was watching *Popeye* when I wanted to watch Wole Soyinka giving a memorial lecture on another channel. I tried to negotiate with my son to change the channel, but he refused. I even tried to give him an overdose of Panado, hoping that he would fall asleep, without success! I lost the argument and had to accept defeat. If I were a tyrannical father, I could have easily suppressed and overruled him. He would have had to accept the overruling because it would have been a normal way of doing things in that type of household. That is basically not my style. Generally, I love, respect, and adore children, particularly my own. At times I am compelled to watch kiddie’s programmes like *Nickelodeon* and *Nicky, Ricky, Dicky and Dawn* and I end up enjoying them. For me to watch my favourite programmes like the news, I must negotiate because they know I respect their feelings, so they succumb. Instead, we alternate programmes. As a result, there are no hard feelings but peace and harmony in the household.

In my neighbourhood there is a house that has become a preschool. Whenever I walk past it, I become very concerned, when I sometime hear one of the childminders shouting at the children. I sometimes imagine how if my children were in that environment, they would be traumatised. It is sad that there are children who are so accustomed to being spanked and shouted at, that they become emotionless and numbed towards such situations. This is terrible for their current and future psychological and emotional health. Violent and socially deviant adults who end up in jail, are likely to have had this kind of upbringing.

I am aware that some preschools employ childminders who are neither competent nor qualified to be entrusted with the responsibility. Experts have been at pains to emphasise that Grade R is the most important phase in the development of the personality of a child, hence the current government's commitment to invest in the foundation phase of the schooling system. We once witnessed on TV and social media a childminder brutally beating children. It was such a horrible sight that I could only reach a conclusion that she was a psycho acting out her personal aggression, inadequacies, and frustrations on vulnerable children. How can an adult exhibit such rage against such a fragile, innocent, vulnerable soul? These days it is a difficult decision to send your child to boarding school because of the prevailing moral corrosion. With femicide on the rise, you need to always be on your toes, that your daughter does not fall for a handsome psychopath who might end up killing her. Frighteningly, in our society it has become a regular occurrence to hear that a five-year-old child or a 90-year-old granny has been raped. The situation is so pathetic and would seem to need divine intervention.

Of course the advantages of my revolutionary and progressive approach to parenthood outweigh the disadvantages, which is why I intend to continue. I hardly know the dates of Mother's Day or Father's Day but am always reminded by the wonderful messages of appreciation that we receive. Another dividend is that, in the household there is less stress and more peace and harmony, the children always smile. When I knock off from work, I look forward to being at home, rather than at a tavern or somewhere else. A key prerequisite is compatibility and friendship between partners. Friends seldom bore each other, and one cannot be expected to be always a gymnast on the horizontal level in a relationship because, as one grows old, stamina and energy get depleted. Something more mature and sustainable must take over;

quantity must be replaced by quality. I am fortunate that almost three decades together, I still enjoy the company of Mathabo and have no intention of looking for an alternative. In the final analysis, stability in a relationship, to a large extent, is dependent on a man. Women as homemakers are inclined towards the creation of a stable and harmonious family environment. It must be said however, that there are exceptions to the rule, indeed there are women who abuse men physically, emotionally, and financially.

To adopt this requires a particular mindset. It requires that we stop adopting, what I will refer to as a 'photographic' approach. Instead, we need to adopt a dialectical approach. The former basically freezes the vulnerability and dependency of a child like a photograph freezes you when your image is taken. This approach must be common with people who are suffering from manic depression and about to commit suicide. In their minds, they freeze the reality that surrounds them, subconsciously regarding it as a static, permanent order beyond which there is no life to be lived. They perceive the problems they face as beyond resolution. In contrast, the dialectical approach acknowledges that, independent of our minds, wishes, likes, and dislikes, the entire reality, ourselves and children, are in perpetual and uninterrupted motion, growth, change and development. Dialectics holds that nature is not in a state of rest and immobility, stagnation, and immutability, but a state of continuous movement and change, renewal and development, some things developing and others dying away. The dialectical approach considers the objective fact that, what is occurring today in front of our eyes is not as static as it appears to us as a mental image, but is in the process of becoming; and can indeed become something else tomorrow, that you did not see coming. According to Marx and Engels 'the whole world, natural, historical, intellectual is represented as a process'. It is quite unfortunate that the human mind has more capacity to comprehend static objects than processes and changes, because there is nothing in the world that remains unchangeable except change. It is only science that enables us to know and understand that which is beyond what we are seeing. When I was incarcerated on Robben Island in 1983, I expected to be released in 2000. Our analysis of the political situation at that time gave us no clue of the massive changes that would occur such that eight years later, we would be released from jail and that Robben Island would become a heritage site.

My current situation and its consequent economic stress have been deliberately created. As an optimist, who believes in a dialectical approach towards reality, I have a belief that 'this too shall pass.' Let us stop taking children for granted; instead, let us love them and hold them in high regard, with a conscious recognition that they have feelings and most importantly, eyes to see and a brain to process what they see. They have a strategic advantage over us; apart from the fact that the future belongs to them, they do not have the garbage of the past. As the 'born frees', they did not have their innocence and purity spoilt as happened with my generation.

Children deserve to be loved unconditionally and be regarded as assets and future investments rather than liabilities or a burden. In some countries, particularly in the East, children are taken seriously, talent is spotted and groomed and they teach children patriotism, collectivism, and love for one another. Why cannot it be done here especially in our new dawn?

Please bear with me. I am going to sound as though I am showing off or bragging. In fact, I am trying to show that my experiment is working well and, if adopted, we can be very proud of our children when they become the adults of the future. Recently, we received a letter from the school that Sizwe attends, congratulating us for bringing him up so well, because he was appointed as a prefect. The school invited the parents to attend an event marking the appointment of 25 such students, at which the parents were required to put their prefect badges on them. Coincidentally, shortly after his appointment as a prefect, he was one of the group of students who was invited to attend the inauguration of President Cyril Ramaphosa, an initiative of Cell C called 'Take a girl child to work'. As a result of that, I have nicknamed him 'Leadership.' I will continue to bombard him with that positive message until it becomes natural for him to assume that position of a leader when he is an adult.

I normally refer to Nkcubeko as 'Princess.' She is already reading a novel, following in the footsteps of her elder sibling who used to love reading novels at that age and is currently reaping the fruits of that passion. I cannot claim that I produced a postgraduate student, but I did create an environment conducive for the harnessing, flourishing, and awakening of the human potential which exists in every child. It was no miracle; any parent that consciously adopts a particular mindset can do it. We must refuse to be victims of the past, and strive for renewed social cohesion.

# Integration or disintegration?

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Almost three months after my release from the prison, I received a very wonderful surprise from the International Defence Aid Fund (IDAF), a London-based organisation. It was a letter with a cheque to the value of £900, calculated at £100 for each year of my political imprisonment. Strangely, throughout my incarceration, I had never known that there was such an arrangement. It was such a big surprise, a very wonderful one indeed! It was quite a lot of money relatively speaking, considering the exchange rate between the British pound and our currency at the time. It came at just the right time, because I was able to fund my own traditional ritual of initiation. I also managed to open my first bank account at Perm Bank after having been declined by FNB. Fortunately, the lady teller at the Perm Bank was a family friend who knew about my situation.

Freedom and peace-loving people throughout the world used to take good care of us while we were incarcerated on Robben Island Prison. Our academic studies were well-funded and we received monthly allowances. We were able to afford a highly equipped and state of the art musical ensemble, with brand new sophisticated instruments. The bass guitar played by Cde Curtis and a book of musical scales for the e-flat alto saxophone by Charlie Parker were imported from America. When we were in dire financial straits, while Mathabo was a student at PE Technicon, we sold that book (\$12) to a music lecturer at the University of Port Elizabeth. The transactions were facilitated by attorney Priscilla Jana and the Mallinicks firm of attorneys in Cape Town where the former wife of Cde Tokyo Sexwale, Ms Judy Moon worked. Shortly after my release, I had regular correspondence with a British lady who belonged to the anti-apartheid movement in London. I received a quarterly anti-apartheid news bulletin, and even a beautiful anti-apartheid T-shirt from her.

Indeed, how could we be in dire straits on Robben Island while we were in the presence of one of the greatest leaders the world had ever known? A leader whose appeal transcended geographical boundaries and social gradations, a global icon *par excellence*; in the person of Cde Mandela. Of course, we enjoyed privileges on Robben Island Prison such as TV sets, movies with a projector during the weekends that was later replaced by VCR cassettes, sport kits, and inter-sectional sports. However, the so-called privileges were not just conferred on a platter but were the result of a long and protracted struggle and pressure from inmates that was started by our leaders as early as the 1960s. On Robben Island, exerting pressure against the authorities to ensure that our living conditions were improved, was a matter of a constant struggle. Once while I was in E-Section, a stalwart of liberalism in South Africa Mrs Helen Suzman, one of a handful of Progressive Federal Party (PFP) members of parliament, visited us accompanied by a delegation, to check on our living conditions. We used not to take such visits seriously because we knew that they were just paying lip service, and nothing ever changed after those visits.

When I first arrived at the MK Office HQ in Shell House in 1994, it was manned by Cde Ref Mudimu, the Former Vice Admiral and Chief of the SA Navy. I reported that we had arrived in our two kombis, with me appointed as a so-called commander of the kombis. Cde Mudimu got so angry that he immediately phoned our regional office in Port Elizabeth to ask why, as an MK Veteran, I was not being sent on one of the several courses available for empowerment. Someone at the regional office fumbled for an answer, not knowing what to say. Cde Mudimu asked me if I had a passport. Fortunately, I did. That is how I was able to attend the course in Zimbabwe that ultimately enabled me to work in the Defence Intelligence Division. Mind you, I was with some of them in the same regional structure of the Eastern Cape as their Regional Commissar. One comrade who was also in the regional office, said to me after I asked him to put me on a course, that I should have a test for HIV. Perhaps if I had tested HIV positive, they would have laughed and celebrated. That is how cruel and heartless some comrades became. If they were to be asked why they did that to me, they could never come up with an appropriate answer.

Among the group attending the course were Cde Bonginkosi Ngcobo, currently a Brigadier General; Cde Mxolisi Sambo, a Brigadier General; Cde France Modise, a Brigadier General; Col Rieketsie (Ret.);

Col Mbobela (Ret.). We all ended up working in the Defence Intelligence Division in Pretoria, with me as the most under-ranked, as well as the comrade who contributed to my under-ranking and marginalisation. Later in 1994, I was at the South African Defence Intelligence College (SADIC) in Pretoria for an interview with the placement board. The same comrade represented me from the MK side, despite the conflict of interest, because we had not been on good terms since being together for the course in Zimbabwe. He succeeded because I was ultimately under-ranked as a Staff Sergeant, even though Shell House (MK HQ) bestowed on me a rank of a Lt Col. He appeared to derive happiness from my misery, mocking my rank, by saying the shining star meant that I was supposed to be a major. That is a person I am supposed to refer to as a comrade. That I managed even to go to Zimbabwe for the Intelligence course was sheer luck. The comrades who conspired against me, and sidelined me as a Regional Commissar, had tried to send me to Wallmansthal, where there would have been no chance of my attending a military course or obtaining recognition. There were courses on offer in various countries and the reason I even managed to integrate was because, on our return from Zimbabwe, we registered on a certified personnel register at Hoedspruit Military Base. This was a situation over which the antagonistic comrades had no control. They wanted to send me to Wallmansthal because they were manning the MK Regional Office, of which I was the co-founder.

By coordinated efforts, my detractors ultimately managed to have me marginalised, and here I am today, a warrant officer struggling to make ends meet. Ten years later, in February 2014, Cde Jerome Maake (when he was a Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Portfolio Committee on Defence) wrote a letter of motivation to Cde Thabang Makwetla (then Deputy Minister of Defence and Military Veterans) for my rank to be reviewed and upgraded, but without success. I respect comrade Jerome because it is exceedingly difficult these days to get assistance from comrades in senior positions. I hope comrade Jerome maintains the spirit of comradeship and is an example for other comrades in similar positions.

Most of my special ops comrades were young, selfless, committed, disciplined, and dedicated cadres of uMkhonto weSizwe, under the direct command of the tried and trusted Cde Joe Slovo. He was, at one point, regarded as enemy number one by the apartheid regime. Many of those comrades died in battles and skirmishes, including 13 who fell

in the infamous Matola Raid in 1981. To be part of that machinery you had to be highly motivated and committed, and most importantly be prepared to die for the revolution. I count my blessings that I am still alive and able to tell the tale. I will always cherish the memory of having been part of MK Special Ops and working with comrades of such rare calibre. The wife of Cde Joe Slovo, Cde Ruth First, was also a dedicated and committed revolutionary activist. She was assassinated in 1982 by means of a parcel bomb despatched by the apartheid security apparatus to Eduardo Mondlane University, where she worked as a lecturer. From now on, when you come across a street bearing her name, you will know the reason. The regime assassinated those who posed a serious threat to its existence. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Mathabo never integrated into the SANDF, even though she was a *bona fide* returnee who received a grant from the NCCR on her return, just like any other returnee. They somehow managed to stop her from getting her special pension, despite the fact she has a special pension number. Instead, they integrated and over-ranked people into the SANDF illegitimately without special pension numbers. Just ask some of them about the meaning of VRAF or NCCR, as it was the only organisation at the time that was mandated to cater for the returnees. You will be surprised by the widespread ignorance. One lady once said, before she integrated, she was making a living by selling clothes. Now she is a full colonel. A certain colonel, who was my friend and sympathetic towards my situation, told me that he had not been in exile. The list of such cases is awfully long and disheartening.

When 'Terror' Lekota was the Minister of Defence he once said, if the integration process were to be revisited, it might create a 'logistical nightmare.' Integration became a means of access to employment for some and a money-making scheme for others, at the expense of those of us who sacrificed their youth to liberate this country. They knew very well that the integration process was legislated by parliament and was meant for those who belonged to the NSF, underground structures or SDUs, but managed openly to render the State, under the ANC, almost toothless in that regard. A senior member of government was once amazed by the number of potential recipients of the special pension, and even asked where they had been during the struggle. During the struggle, it had been not fashionable but dangerous to join the liberation movement. There were relatively few of us. Even in 1978, in the biggest MK/ANC camp in southern Angola, we numbered fewer than five



hundred. There are now thousands on the list of recipients of special pensions and other benefits.

At one stage, I could not access my records at the Department of Military Veterans (DMV) because a certain comrade with whom I had had personal differences was an influential chief director, even with the Director General (DG) himself. It seemed that the DG had been 'captured' by him. To be captured by the Guptas or White Monopoly Capital is understandable because they have huge resources, but not by an individual. I understand that this chief director later left the DMV unceremoniously by the back door owing to corruption. In another incident during the SANDF integration process, Cde Ref Mudimu (then Chief of the SA Navy) referred us to DHQ for assistance with Mathabo's case. That comrade told us, in no uncertain terms, that my wife was not going to integrate. He had been with me in 1978 for military training in Moncada Detachment. When we met later at a social level, he behaved as though nothing had happened and that I had no reason to feel hurt. He later joined COPE and I asked myself what had happened to his principles and political maturity, after having been entrusted with high responsibilities in the movement. Such comrades are cunning and organised in their sidelining and destructive behaviour. If one of them targets you, he coordinates with his friends to ensure that you are marginalised, and potentially destitute. They fabricate allegations that you are a sell-out or 'uNgumdlwembe', yet they themselves 'kukudlwembezela', thereby depriving the Movement of comrades who could strengthen the Organisation. I know of some comrades who fell victim to this and ended up pursuing paths of self-destruction and overindulgence, ultimately dying a pauper's death, much to the delight of their sadistic sideliners. Thankfully, I am talking about a negligible number of individuals. Their behaviour is not typical of the whole organisation. Individuals come and go but the movement remains for ever. Nevertheless, it is hard to accept that a close comrade who shared the same trench during the struggle, later hits you so hard when it comes to your personal growth, progress and career. As a revolutionary optimist, I know that there are more people out there with kind and genuine hearts than the opposite. That is why kind people with good hearts and compassion are often blessed. When there is a conflict between good and evil, good always prevails, though at times the damage has already been done. Sometimes those who stand for the truth get absolved and vindicated when they are no more, such as the philosopher and great thinker Galileo.

# Conclusion

Writing in such detail has been an emotionally draining yet intellectually enlightening and therapeutic exercise for me. It enabled me to delve deep into my inner self and intellect to ensure that I discover my voice that has been gagged and marginalised since the advent of our democratic dispensation. I deliberately wrote it in such a way that it constitutes informative, educative, and inspiring material to the reader. I trust that it will provoke and influence, in a positive and progressive way. 'Knowledge is power', but if shared, it becomes more powerful, with the potential to be a material force to influence a person's outlook and perspective positively and progressively.

I was flattered when a writer, who works in the Department of Arts and Culture, read an early draft of this book and gave it the thumbs up. He read it twice because he found it quite eye-opening and informative. I hope it will be similarly informative for other readers. It is my unique and original contribution to the growing documentation of South African socio-cultural, economic, and political commentary, not conventional and orthodox, but from an unashamedly Marxist-Leninist perspective. I categorise myself as an uncompromisingly Ideologically Conscious Adherent of Left Wing Marxism-Leninism. I am sustained in that adherence by the conviction that Marxist-Leninist doctrine provides the most scientific, objective, educative and progressive world outlook. It should be embraced by anyone who genuinely intends to sharpen their analytical tools and broaden their knowledge, to enable them to make a positive impact on any intellectual discourse. As Lenin said, 'The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true. It is comprehensive and harmonious and provides men with an integral world outlook irreconcilable with any form of superstition, reaction, or

defence of bourgeois oppression. It is the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German Philosophy, English Political Economy and French Socialism.<sup>746</sup>

I have tried, to the best of my intellectual ability, to contextualise it to be relevant to our own situation of social transition/transformation from the rotten old apartheid past, with its concomitant moribund reactionary ideological prejudices and social consciousness, to the new democratic dispensation that is currently in its nascent stages of evolution, with its own teething problems. That is why I equate the current situation of our social transition with the biological condition of a woman who is in labour and about to give birth. In that regard, as things stand, especially when one considers the level of political consciousness of those who are supposed to take a lead in the revolutionary process, there is a possibility of what I refer to as a 'Miscarriage of the Revolutionary Process' taking place, that can easily lead to something like an 'Arab Spring' if we are not careful. In this text the present South African socio-cultural, economic, and political landscape post-1994 and the corresponding social consciousness, including the sudden emergence of bourgeois behavioural tendencies by the Black African elite, have been discussed and elaborated on quite extensively.

For one to understand what I am saying requires that the person engages with an open mind, without preconceived ideas, in an extensive study of the three components of Marxism-Leninism namely, Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism and Political Economy. It is unfortunate that this is not achievable overnight. Ideally, it should become a lifestyle, assimilated and internalised over a long period of time. It is a problem-solving model that will capacitate you to think critically, out of the box and to utilise a dialectical method when examining personal, social and economic behaviour or phenomena. The intention is first for personal growth, development, and positive self-transformation – then for your family and community at large. Marxism-Leninism recognises the family institution as the most important basic unit, nucleus, and foundation of society where human personalities are produced across a spectrum of extremes, from great leader to dangerous social outcast, psychopath or criminal. Even at the level of charming the woman of your amorous interest to ensure that she feels special, free and self-fulfilled, the ideology empowers you to subordinate your pleasure and happiness to hers and to give her the impression that she is in control, whereas you are in absolute control

as is typical of a true genuine Marxist-Leninist gentleman, who is an incurable romantic who holds women in high esteem.

Women must please bear with me for appearing as though in this specific regard I am addressing men only. In view of the current abhorrent widespread abuse of women, and gender-based violence in our communities, men need to change their chauvinist tendencies and bigoted mindsets, to be conscientised to start with a clean slate and begin to transform themselves in a conscious and deliberate way, for the sake of themselves and their children who will be fathers and mothers in future. Admittedly, this is not an easy task because men's stereotyping and demonisation of women has been occasioned by the social and cultural conditioning and programming of many years and generations of patriarchalism. An anecdote, the validity of which I cannot confirm exists that around the 17th Century a tribal leader (I am not going to mention the tribe), out of curiosity, instructed a highly pregnant woman to have her stomach opened so that he could see what was inside. Gender-based violence in the extreme. Certain traditional practices by Black African communities based on patriarchalism are destructive and demeaning for women. Think of forced marriages of young girls and genital mutilation. Self-diagnosis and self-transformation are essential for us to stop using ancestry or culture as an excuse for perpetuating such abusive practices.

Culture, not nature, conferred the privilege of being the head of a family to a man. We must stop abusing that privilege. As a leader of the family, a man is entrusted to lead, and he is expected to do that with honour and integrity. Like any leader with good intentions, he must motivate, inspire and positively influence those he leads if he is to create an environment conducive for a happy and psychologically balanced household, with the children inclined to succeed in future rather than to face it as victims, products, and casualties of a dysfunctional and abusive family relationship. What can you expect from a son whose mother was constantly abused by his father? He is likely to follow suit as an adult, having assimilated such behaviour as the norm. The first form of education the child gets is from the parents, but quite a lot of men have children all over the place and do not know what those children are eating and how they are being brought up, rendering the poor souls fatherless. They were absent when the children were infants in nappies and drinking milk formula, and later when they began to acquire moral values.

Marxism-Leninism capacitates one to substantiate the progressive moral value system that one directly and indirectly inculcates in the minds of one's children and others in the family. A moral value system, beliefs and ideas that are not based on backward traditional practices and bourgeois mindedness with the concomitance of self-centeredness, patriarchalism, tribalism, racism, egoism, snobbishness, haughtiness, arrogance, conceit, and all other related destructive prejudices that are unfortunately prevalent and widespread in our capitalist society. These prejudices are destroying traditional communalism and ubuntu that we used to hold dear in Black African communities. Like any other industrialised bourgeois/capitalist society, we are in an unpalatable situation where material things and objects assume an independent existence, that tend to dominate us as human beings. In essence, we have subconsciously surrendered and transferred our own human and social relationships and humanity into material things and objects, where human beings are conflated with the material things in their possession. Consequently, capitalism is a system of extreme contradictions and absurdity where things are turned into their opposite namely, ugliness into beauty, stupidity into intelligence, mediocrity into virtue. If I am a dumb man, but have wealth and material possessions, it is easy for me to surround myself with intelligent people who will do the thinking for me. If I am one of the ugliest men on earth but have status, I can attract the most beautiful woman around.

What is happening to the famous world-renowned personalities, like R. Kelly or Bill Cosby, still glorified because of status, yet clearly lacking moral rectitude in their abuse of young girls? In our situation, what about the incredibly beautiful and intelligent Reeva, who fell for the 'Blade Runner' Pistorius because of his status. Think of the glamorous and glittering reality TV shows that have recently mushroomed: *Mam Khize*, *Johannesburg Housewives*, *Living a Dream with Somizi*, *Madam and Mercy*, *Being Bonang*, *Village Girls*. The pointless music videos of rappers and hip-hop stars displaying obscene wealth (luxurious cars and mansions) with scantily clad girls gyrating to reinforce the materialist obsession, usually presented by young people who should be studying. So, our children are in a way encouraged to aspire to live such a lifestyle, taking short cuts to the riches of people with questionable moral values.

Since 2014 I have been knocking on different doors, trying to have my rank upgraded and my situation improved, to no avail. Now in

2020, I am still involved in that struggle to have my rank or situation improved. I do not intend to stop; not anytime soon, until perhaps I do not have any energy left in my body and mind to continue to demand what I deserve. Because not only am I entitled to it, but I do also deserve it for I earned it with sweat and blood. Thanks to the intellectual strength and energy I have managed to harness, to be capacitated to pour my heart out in this manner. Let me hasten to mention that I do count my blessings. Some comrades are in the same or even worse predicaments than mine, and may not have the capacity to write and reflect as I have done. This book is also written on their behalf. If you are one of these, I implore you to keep strong, for the sake of your family, as well as all wretched, downtrodden poverty-stricken Black Africans whose children sometimes sleep without anything in their stomachs. During my daily taxi rides to and from work, I pass Marabastad and I'm reminded by the shacks made up of black plastic, about the squalor, indignity, and degradation that our Black African people are still living under. I see Black African children barefooted with torn clothes playing around pools of dirty water next to the shacks. It is obvious that they do not attend school. What can we then expect from those children when they grow to become adults? Whenever I pass the area, I cannot avoid watching helplessly, and wonder how they survive, especially when it is raining. I was almost brought to tears when I caught a glimpse of them fighting over what looked like a piece of bread. That is not the only squatter area in our country. Yet Cde Rolihlahla Mandela, during his presidential inauguration in 1994, said that Black African children should never go hungry again.

It is also worth mentioning that within our fold as former freedom fighters and revolutionary activists, it seems that the law of the jungle is at play. Survival of the fittest, everybody for himself and God cares for us all. We have become the epitome of a bourgeois/capitalist society that is divided into the 'haves' and the 'have nots.' The former do not want to be seen to be associated with the latter even though we were all in the National Liberation Struggle, in the same trenches, calling each other comrades. As I have mentioned in earlier chapters of this book, comrades who were close to me both in the bush and in prison on Robben Island have deserted me because, from a materialistic perspective, we are not of the same status. For me, this is an indication that the impact of the socioeconomic and political conditions of the system of apartheid capitalism on our psyche and consciousness as

Black Africans is very deep indeed. I fear that to uproot such mindsets will take an awfully long time, not during the lifetime of our current generation.

We need to move towards the development of a progressive and positive mindset and consciousness with a moral value system that is based on peace and humanness (ubuntu). The process of learning Marxist-Leninist classics as a liberating ideology, must necessarily be based on a conscious and deliberate effort of assimilation and internalisation of progressive new scientific ideas and knowledge that are devoid of all the negative and retrogressive preconceived ideas that represent the past; that have been imbued and inculcated in us for generations namely, racism, tribalism, egoism, patriarchalism, and unscientific beliefs.

Our former president of the RSA and of the ANC Cde Thabo Mbeki, a Marxist-Leninist himself (although I do not know now lately), once said that we must be 'intellectual rebels', implying that we must always question and be critical. Similarly, Einstein declared that one should never stop asking questions. We need to break the shackles of mental slavery, and use our imaginations to craft a better world. At the time of writing, I have used the Marxist-Leninist philosophical outlook for 42 years and it has never, under any circumstances, failed me. Even now, I am never satiated by its objective truthfulness and intellectual omnipotence. The most important part for me personally, is that it constituted a particularly good alternative to the formal education system to which Black African people were subjected to after the arrival of the white settlers. An education system that was meant to sustain and maintain the reactionary and backward ideological hegemony of the apartheid capitalist system, that was specifically meant to normalise the abnormal, legitimise the illegitimate system that was once declared as a 'crime against humanity' by the United Nations. It was not a surprise that during the '#Fees must fall' protests students at the universities of our country also called for the decolonisation of education.

Throughout the years, wherever and whenever I had an opportunity to visit a library, apart from other reading material I like which includes psychology (motivational and inspiring material), and biographies and books about leadership, I would always search for anything that was Marxist-Leninist before anything else; consistently endeavouring to sharpen my cognitive capacity and analytical tools. In the library of the Defence Intelligence HQ where I am currently working in Pretoria, I

have read almost all the somewhat limited material on this philosophy, some of which constituted revision, because I have read them all before. I have avoided books that distorted the original texts. These were written by bourgeois university professors and intellectuals, especially of the north, who tend to discredit the relevance of Marxism-Leninism because it is diametrically opposed to their class and material interests and exposes, in a very scientific and objective way, the horrors and corrosive effects of the system of capitalism on human nature. That reality is being proved on a daily basis by empirical evidence as we can all see for ourselves.

Marxism-Leninism maintains that:

Our ideas do not come from thin air; they are a product of the way we live. What we think, what we imagine, what we want and what we believe are conditioned by the fact that we live in Capitalism, which on the one hand connects people around the world as never before, while on the other hand produces miserable conditions for the vast majority. This form of the mode of production opened up creative possibilities for humanity to think, create and imagine, in contrast to the provincialism of feudal thought, while also closing off many of these possibilities for the working masses.

I personally know of people who are typical products of the system, especially Black Africans who have become part of the wealthy middle class since 1994. Their egoistic and individualistic tendencies have made them merciless, cruel, and narrow-minded. Now, for them, the world seems to revolve around the accumulation of money and material things. When you ask them for assistance they enquire as to why you are not successful. For them success is equal to material possession. They are advised to heed the words of Cde Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, 'To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.' Far more fulfilling than to be egoistic and deceptively think that the world revolves around the pursuance of money and material things.

Throughout the process of my writing, I instinctively knew that I was competing, colloquially speaking, in a space which is extremely limited and unfortunately dominated by right-wing neo-liberal intellectuals,



but I was more than prepared to take up the challenge. Hence, I tried, as much as possible, not to be conformist but original and different while maintaining relevance. Writing a book is an intellectually intense endeavour, that requires one to make a deliberate and conscious effort to make a lot of sense. I surprised myself by the fact that I never had to do much research or approach anyone to remind me of the now distant dates and events during the National Liberation Struggle. Although a lonely intellectual and emotional journey that is purely a product of my memory, I was committed to pursue it to its finality.

Furthermore, I wanted to prove to the doomsayers and detractors, whose malicious intention was beyond my understanding, that the human spirit is indestructible, especially when ignited by ideological conviction through years of involvement in the National Liberation Struggle. Fortunately, what they intended had the opposite effect, in that they enabled me to rededicate myself to ensure that I do not go down and surrender as they wished. Instead, they encouraged me to write and reflect in an exercise of self-affirmation and historic significance that has given me the most profound satisfaction I have experienced in my entire life. For that I truly thank them.

Due to reminiscences and visualisation of the past, there were times during my writing when I had to close the door of my office just to allow myself to sob, without disturbance. Those moments would particularly occur when I had to try extremely hard to reconcile my past with my present, a dichotomy I have been trying to harmonise for the past 26 years since the advent of our democratic dispensation, without success. From 1978, aged 15 years, when I should have been at school, until 1991, aged 29 years, I had never experienced a normal self-fulfilling and happy youthful life. I was in MK camps in the bush in Angola, with a brief stint in Russia for military training in 1981, and in prison on Robben Island, engaged in a revolutionary struggle to liberate this country. When I stepped out of that prison in Cape Town in April 1991, I was in a celebratory mood, saying to myself 'free at last.' I never imagined the marginalisation by comrades that has persisted for almost three decades into the democratic dispensation, for which I fought and sacrificed so much.

For every living human being, confined in space and time on planet earth, existence is limited. At some point, I will be swallowed by the soil. I just hope when that moment arrives and catches up with me, the above-mentioned dichotomy between my past and present will have

been reconciled and put to an end once and for all. For the restoration of my wounded dignity, and the sake of my children. Failing which, the concept of rest in peace (RIP) in my specific situation, will never be applicable but will just be a mere empty rhetoric when I have ceased to exist. For how can a person be expected to rest in peace, after the ongoing deliberate efforts during his earthly life to hinder any sense of peace and harmony?

Let me close by quoting the preamble to our noble Constitution: 'We the people of South Africa recognise the injustices of our past; honour those who suffered in pursuit of Justice and Freedom in our land; respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.'

As a law-abiding citizen and a former committed and dedicated freedom fighter of this country, who sacrificed his youth to ensure that we have a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, free and prosperous country, and that we achieve the Bill of Rights and the noble Constitution, which is one of the most progressive in the world, I unwaveringly wish to reaffirm my full support of all that which is enshrined in our noble Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

A luta continua  
Avictoria Etcetera  
Warmest regards

*Khaya Skweyiya*

# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ACDP</b>	African Christian Democratic Party
<b>AK</b>	Avtomat Kalashnikova
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress
<b>APC</b>	Armoured Personnel Carriers
<b>B-BBEE</b>	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
<b>BBC</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>BCM</b>	Black Consciousness Movement
<b>BMW</b>	Bayerische Motoren Werke
<b>BRICS</b>	Brazil Russia India China South Africa
<b>Cde O.R.</b>	Comrade Oliver Reginald Kaizana Tambo
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CODESA</b>	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
<b>COO</b>	Chief Operating Officer
<b>COPE</b>	Congress of the People
<b>COSAS</b>	Congress of South African Students
<b>COSC</b>	Cambridge O Levels Senior Certificate
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CV</b>	Curriculum Vitae
<b>DA</b>	Democratic Alliance
<b>DET</b>	Department of Education and Training
<b>DG</b>	Director-General
<b>DIRCO</b>	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
<b>DMV</b>	Department of Military Veterans
<b>DNA</b>	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>DStv</b>	Digital Satellite Television
<b>EFF</b>	Economic Freedom Fighters

<b>FAPLA</b>	Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola
<b>GCIS</b>	Government Communication and Information System
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>IDAF</b>	International Defence Aid Fund
<b>KGB</b>	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti
<b>MCW</b>	Military Combat Work
<b>MDM</b>	Mass Democratic Movement
<b>MK</b>	uMkhonto weSizwe
<b>NCCR</b>	National Coordinating Committee for Repatriation
<b>NDR</b>	National Democratic Revolution
<b>NFP</b>	National Freedom Party
<b>NIA</b>	National Intelligence Agency
<b>NP</b>	National Party
<b>NPA</b>	National Prosecuting Authority
<b>NSF</b>	Non-Statutory Forces
<b>NUM</b>	National Union of Mineworkers
<b>PAC</b>	Pan Africanist Congress
<b>PFP</b>	Progressive Federal Party
<b>PHDS</b>	Pull Him Down Syndrome
<b>PFLP</b>	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
<b>PLAN</b>	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
<b>PLO</b>	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
<b>PRASA</b>	Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>RDP</b>	Reconstruction and Development Programme
<b>RENAMO</b>	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana
<b>SAAF</b>	South African Air Force
<b>SABC</b>	South African Broadcasting Corporation
<b>SADF</b>	South African Defence Force
<b>SADIC</b>	South African Defence Intelligence College
<b>SAMHS</b>	South African Military Health Service
<b>SANDF</b>	South African National Defence Force
<b>SANNC</b>	South African Native National Convention
<b>SAYCO</b>	South African Youth Congress
<b>STD</b>	Sexually-Transmitted Disease
<b>SUV</b>	Sport Utility Vehicle
<b>SWAPO</b>	South West African People's Organisation

<b>TBVC</b>	Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei
<b>TRC</b>	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
<b>UDF</b>	United Democratic Front
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNISA</b>	University of South Africa
<b>UNITA</b>	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>UPE</b>	University of Port Elizabeth
<b>VCR</b>	Video Cassette Recorder
<b>VOA</b>	Voice of America
<b>VRAF</b>	Voluntary Repatriation Application Form
<b>ZANLA</b>	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
<b>ZAPU</b>	Zimbabwe African People's Union
<b>ZIPRA</b>	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

# Endnotes

- 1 Cde O.R. – as we affectionately called him in Angola – the former president of the African National Congress, while it was based in the bush, in exile under very difficult conditions, and when it was not as fashionable as it is currently to be a member of the movement – a towering revolutionary intellectual par excellence.
- 2 Nimtz, A.H. 2014. *Lenin's Electoral Strategy from 1907 to the October Revolution of 1917: The Ballot, the Streets, or Both*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 3 Now part of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, Port Elizabeth was in 2021 renamed Gqeberha – the isiXhosa name of the Baakens River which flows in from the west through the suburbs of Kabega, Newton Park and Walmer into the city's harbour and Algoa Bay.
- 4 Translating it into English would distort its poetic substance.
- 5 Percy 'Chippa' Moloi played football in the 1960s and 70s for Kaiser Chiefs.
- 6 Ashcraft, Richard. 'Class and Class Conflict in Contemporary Capitalist Societies.' *Comparative Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1979, pp. 225–245. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/421757](http://www.jstor.org/stable/421757). Accessed 7 July 2021.
- 7 Joshua 9:23 in the Old Testament of the Bible.
- 8 Including Cde Luthuli, Cde Tambo, Cde Madiba, Cde Mbeki, Cde Zuma, Cde Hani, and President Cde Cyril Ramaphosa.
- 9 Translation: 'Boers are dogs, they will die dogs'.
- 10 Named after Cuban revolutionary Guillermo Moncada.
- 11 Marry Mini was amongst the 35 Comrades killed in the infamous Lesotho Raid in 1985.
- 12 Marx, in his Communist manifesto, expresses it thus: 'The bourgeois, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless infeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom – Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.' (<http://www.wright.edu/~christopher.oldstone-moore/marx.htm>).
- 13 The collaborative grouping of Brazil–Russia–India–China–South Africa, five of the major developing economies.
- 14 <https://borgenproject.org/nelson-mandela-quotes-about-education/>

- 15 Nicolai Ostrofsky, 2018. *How the Steel was Tempered* (Как закалялась сталь). Amazon kindle edition.
- 16 Nelson Mandela, 1994. *Long Walk to Freedom : The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Little Brown & Co: Philadelphia.
- 17 Amilcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea*, stage 1, London: Monthly Review Press, 1974, 70–72.
- 18 This region formed part of the Soviet Union at that time, and subsequently a region of independent Ukraine after 1991, until it was unilaterally reoccupied by Russia in 2014.
- 19 See for example John Dugard, 1973. <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cspca/cspca.html>. The Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. Apartheid was annually condemned by the General Assembly as contrary to Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter of the United Nations from 1952 until 1990. In 1966, the General Assembly labelled apartheid as a crime against humanity (resolution 2202 A (XXI) and in 1984 the Security Council endorsed this determination (resolution 556 (1984) of 23 October 1984). This convention was adopted by the General Assembly on 30 November 1973, with 91 votes in favour, four against and 26 abstentions.
- 20 9K32 *Strela-2* (Russian Стрела = arrow).
- 21 The tensions are well documented. Suspected spies were tortured and often shot, as were others for much lesser breaches of discipline such as criticising the leadership or even smoking dagga. See Mwezi Twala & Ed Benard, 1994. *Mbokodo, Inside MK: Mwezi Twala – A Soldier’s Story*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.
- 22 Subsequent research contests the outcome of the battle, see for example Leopold Scholtz, 2020. *The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale*. Warwick: Helion & Company.
- 23 Ho Chi Minh, An appeal to compatriots and fighters throughout the country, 17 July 1966.
- 24 Joshua Nkomo, 1984. *Nkomo: The Story of my Life*. Harare: Sapes Trust.
- 25 Poem written by Bertholt Brecht, ‘In Praise of Fighters’ (1930).
- 26 Pieter-Louis Myburgh, 2019. *Gangster State: Unravelling Ace Magashule’s Web of Capture*. Cape Town: Penguin Random House.
- 27 <https://infed.org/mobi/antonio-gramsci-schooling-and-education/>.
- 28 Kate A. Crehan, 2016. *Gramsci’s common sense: Inequality and its narratives*. Durham: Duke University Press. [https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-0-8223-6239-5\\_601.pdf](https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-0-8223-6239-5_601.pdf).
- 29 Jacques Pauw, 2017. *The President’s Keepers: Those keeping Zuma in power and out of prison*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- 30 Karl Marx, 1844. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts: Estranged Labour*. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>
- 31 <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/transcript-17th-nelson-mandela-annual-lecture-by-chief-justice-mogoeng-mogoeng>, 24 November 2019.
- 32 <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2020-03-09-display-of-shallow-money-via-reality-shows-dupes-the-poor-into-indolent-wishful-life/>.
- 33 <https://www.marxist.com/karl-marx-130-years.htm>.
- 34 Cde Kgalema was General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) from 1991–98, following in the footsteps of founding GS Cde Cyril Ramaphosa who served in that role from 1982 to 1991. Their common background in trade unionism is an advantage for any revolutionary worthy of the name.
- 35 While on Robben Island, Cde Radebe rose to the level of head of the ANC’s political department. He later served as Minister of Justice and Correctional Services (2009–14), Minister in the Presidency (2014–18) and Minister of Mineral resources and Energy (2018–19).

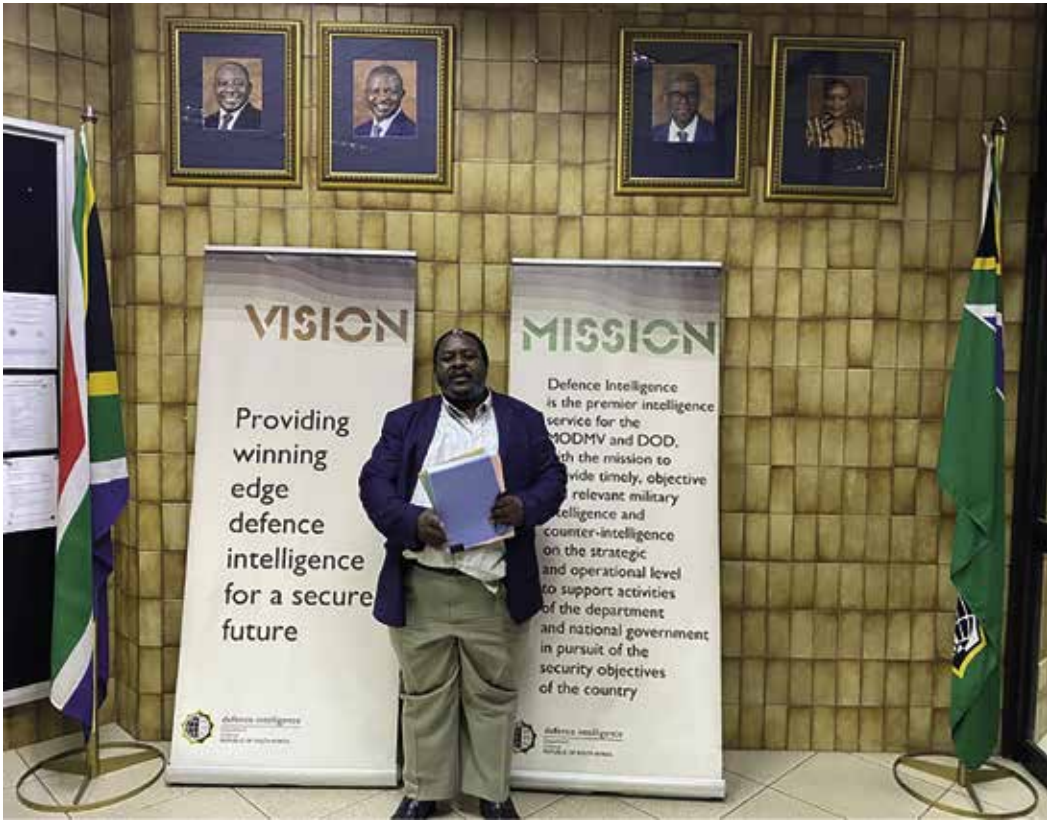
- 36 Elder brother of Cde Mandisi Mphahlw, Minister of Trade and Industry 2004–9, and South African High Commissioner to Rwanda since 2020.
- 37 He recently retired after working in Defence Intelligence under the Inspector General as an Auditor, a post he occupied because of a BCom degree he obtained while we were together in G-Section.
- 38 Karl Marx, 1844. Contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right. <http://web.pdx.edu/~tothm/religion/Marx.pdf>.
- 39 Karl Marx, 1845. Eleven Theses on Feuerbach. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>.
- 40 Nelson Mandela, 1994. Ibid.
- 41 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/convention-democratic-south-africa-codesa>. The convention comprised an initial 228 delegates from nineteen political parties who committed to participate in negotiations for a new dispensation.
- 42 Sociology 15: Foundations of Sociological Theory, Fall 2008. Handout Two, Marx and Engels. <https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/media/1812/HANDOUT%2520TWO--MARX%252C%25202008.doc>.
- 43 SA History Online, 2021. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/hendrik-verwoerd-10-quotes-hendrik-verwoerd-politics-web-20-september-2016>.
- 44 SA History Online, 2021. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/quotes-steve-biko>
- 45 V.I. Lenin, first published in Pravda number 8, 22 January 1925. Lecture on the 1905 Revolution. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/jan/09.htm>.
- 46 <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/mar/x01.htm> V.I. Lenin, 1913. *The Three Sources and Three Components Parts of Marxism*. Lenin's *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Moscow, Volume 19, pages 21–28.





Localities in which the story takes place: South Africa's former Cape, Natal and Transvaal provinces, as well as Mozambique, Angola and Ukraine.





Author at the offices of the Department of Military Veterans.



Reunion of former prisoners in 1993 to discuss the future heritage value of Robben Island. Amongst those with the author are Naphtali Manana and Paul Langa.



Author in about 1998.



Author in 2021.



The Skweyiya family: Nkcubeko, Sizwe, Khaya, Mathabo and Siphesihle.

Khaya Skweyiya grew up in a devout Methodist family, attending school in New Brighton township, Port Elizabeth and in rural KwaDubu, Fort Beaufort. As a teenager he was bewildered and enraged at the aggressive disrespect shown to his parents by young apartheid policemen. This prompted and galvanised his resolve to fight the system. Aged only 15, he joined uMkhonto we Sizwe and secretly left the country to train as a Struggle combatant. He was subjected to harshly rigorous military and political training in Angola, and a course on artillery weapons in Simferopol. He was captivated by the dialectical methods of social analysis derived from the writings of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. On re-entry to the country, he was arrested in Zululand and imprisoned on Robben Island for nine years, where he spent time with many of the future political leaders of democratic South Africa.

Since his release from prison he has married and raised a family in Pretoria, earning a living as an official in the Department of Defence. Although grateful for the advent of the democratic dispensation in 1994, he is disturbed and disillusioned by the decline in adherence to Marxist ideology amongst many of his erstwhile MK and ANC comrades, by whom he feels abandoned and marginalised. He presents a robust critique of the ease with which much of the new black middle class has been absorbed into bourgeois capitalist aspirations and pursuits at the expense of the poor majority. His story includes insightful diversions into the role of the media and the importance of family cohesion.



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ISBN 978-1-928332-81-7



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